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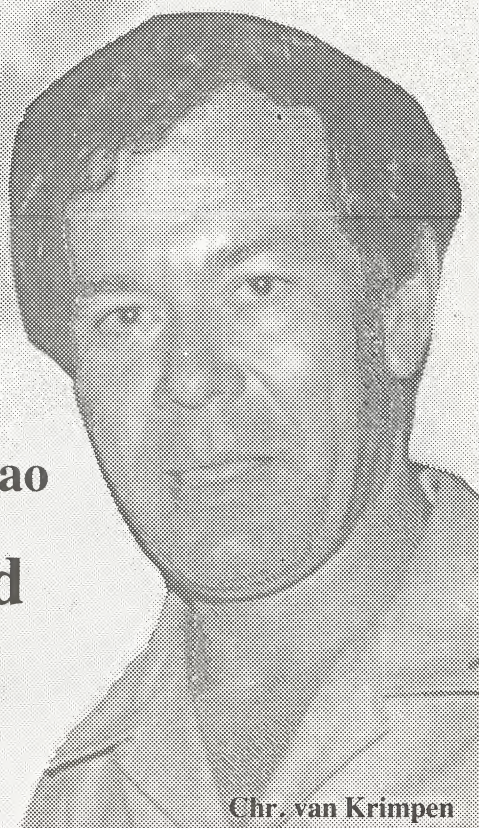
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# REVIEW



E. Voges.

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## FROM THE EDITOR

In its almost five year existence AR has never sounded as critical and worried as in this issue. In general, editorial policy has been to emphasize the positive and possible. A policy born out of the sincere conviction that the Netherlands Antilles does have plenty of opportunities to continue as a viable society in spite of the absence of natural resources. Its mixed and open community holds a promise of know-how, entrepreneurship and insight which stands in no relation to the actual size of its population. Where fifty nationalities can feel at home everything should be possible.

That conviction has not changed. What seems to have changed is the general appreciation of that unique character of Antillean society. Veiled in terms of Antilleanization and 'quest for identity' the gospel of mediocracy seems to have taken a hold of the hearts and minds of too many. As a result there is a worrisome absence of desire

to excel and to achieve goals beyond immediate self-interest. A lack of pride and character, which is particularly evident in the political arena. Consequently one witnesses an eroding of respect for leadership in general.

A development which in turn invites those sick minds which rather preach resentment than call forth the best in people to ride the tide. The real issue the Antilles is facing today is far more of a mental than an economic nature. Hopefully this will be realized now that the economy is sliding backward rather rapidly. This hope has prompted us to become more critical. AR has no desire to be reckoned among the so-called silent majority. In fact we believe that majority should no longer shun its responsibility, but rather that it should step forward and join in the effort to get the country back on track. For in spite of all the bad news the opportunities are still plentiful!

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# TOPSY TURVY

## *What else can one say ?*

**W**ell, a lot more and in a decidedly less playful tone! The ongoing formation talks are by now not only an unbelievable manifestation of political ineptitude, but for that very same reason a dangerous mockery of democracy. The leading question at the end of August was: is there no common sense left at all and if so will it still have a chance to prevail? Many by then were of the opinion that only by going back to the people there might be some hope for a return to sanity.

**T**he fall of the cabinet late June was already a most extraordinary affair. But as we wrote then, prime-minister Martina's decision to step down seemed somehow to do justice to the Antillean democratic tradition. The appointment of St. Maarten's capable Dr. Claude Wathey as informateur was a further indication that the eventual outcome of the crisis might be all for the better. The deteriorating economy and pressing constitutional issues demanded a cabinet with both a broad support in parliament and a clear vision of how to go about setting the country back on its feet. Dr. Wathey's report on his first rounds of talks sounded hopeful.

All around there appeared to be serious willingness to co-operate and

get down to business. Consequently the Governor of the Netherlands Antilles asked Dr. Wathey to continue his work now as formateur. In an exuberant mood Dr. Wathey announced that he would need a week to present the country with a new cabinet. It should in all fairness be said that in private he added "but I will let you know when my week starts".

**W**hat did start was a revival of old-fashioned parochial politics. Not the burning issues of the day appeared to be on the minds of a number of political leaders, but how to maneuver themselves and their party into a position of power. Instead of sitting down to discuss in depth what policies might meet the need of the hour, a quarrel ensued about which party could rightfully claim the premiership in a new cabinet. Seemingly plausible arguments, but with no relation to the nation's real problems, rapidly turned the formation talks into what one daily paper called 'a circus'.

MAN, Curaçao's largest party felt it had no choice but to leave the negotiations. Although this was vehemently denied by the other Curaçao parties, most observers were of the opinion that outmaneuvering MAN had been

their express purpose.

**I**f so they may eventually pay dearly for it. The present situation certainly does not seem to warrant the exclusion of the largest party from government. There seems, moreover, to be a general agreement also among those who have little love for MAN as a party that its leader Don Martina should again lead the government. His proven integrity and rapport with the people single him out for the job. On the other hand many wonder why anyone would wish to jeopardize his political career by aspiring to that position in these adverse times. An argument which goes far in proving the ineptitude of a number of politicians as party leaders.

**T**here has certainly not been any proof of the kind of statesmanship the country needs at this particular time. For that reason the call for early elections is increasingly being heard. As AR went on the press is was reported that the Governor of the Netherlands Antilles had summoned Dr. Wathey for an interim report. Hopefully an intervention by the highest authority in the country will set the formation process back on its feet. The continued bad news from the economic and social front certainly does not permit a further loss of time!





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# *Prime Minister Don Martina meets President Ronald Reagan at Caribbean Conference*

*by Paul De Windt*

From July 17 to 19 the University of South Carolina hosted the first Caribbean Conference in the United States in which 15 Caribbean leaders and several high-ranking U.S. Administration officials got the chance to discuss common Caribbean and U.S. problems and interests, and ways in which the U.S. can help these countries achieve economic and political stability. Among those in Columbia S.C. were Antillean Prime Minister Don Martina and, be it for only a few hours, President Ronald Reagan. The last one's presence, during the height of the Democratic Convention in Los Angeles, was enough for some members of the U.S. press present to call the summit a "sham", arranged to move some of the media attention away from L.A. and to the republican incumbent. It cannot be said though, even if the date of the summit may have been changed to achieve that purpose, that the only good things to come out of it were the pictures of the President with the Caribbean leaders for the press, as a Washington-based periodical wrongly put it.

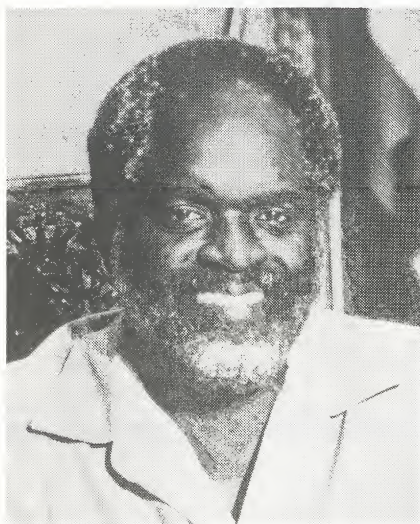
If the short-term, practical, benefits of the conference can be doubted, the impact on U.S.-Caribbean relations of a meeting between the president, administration officials and 15 heads of Caribbean States cannot be denied in the long run. The discussions may not have sparked any new economic measures or real improvements because of a reluctance of the Treasury and Commerce departments, backed by Congress, to give more body to the Caribbean Basin Initiative, the talks will undoubtedly strengthen economic and strategic ties between the U.S. and the Caribbean in the end. While most of the Caribbean leaders present in their opening speeches were content to talk about improving relations through the conference and hailed the CBI, Antillean Prime Minister Don Martina was one of the few to criticize the 6-month-old measure for not doing enough to strengthen the economies of the Caribbean States, its primary goal. Congress eliminated most of the products that are widely produced in the Caribbean from the list of items that can be exported into the U.S. market duty-free, so that especially for the smaller islands with little in the way of raw materials the CBI in reality offers little. Pending U.S. measures on textile for the sake of domestic industry protection will also have a negative impact on possible benefits that include textile products on the

duty-free list could have for the islands. At first some of the advantages of the CBI looked promising, but the Netherlands Antilles just as most of the islands will not reap the benefits of conventions by U.S. firms that through the CBI can be held in the Caribbean and are tax deductible, because the price is too high. Holland's agreeing to finance a new International Trade center in Curacao could have brought convention activities and tourism to the island and given a highly needed boost to the lagging tourism trade, but the existing demand for exchange of information that accompanies this possibility can-

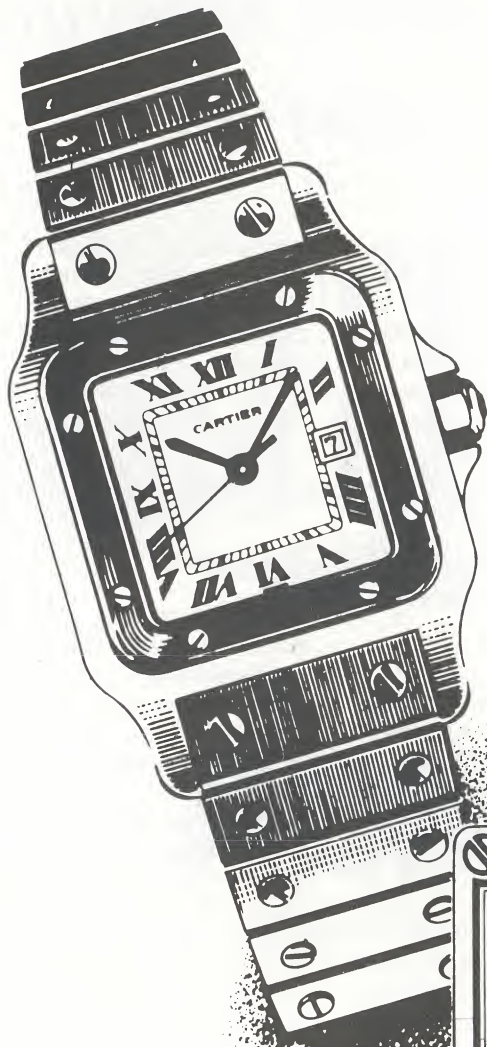
not be met by many of the Caribbean countries, except possibly the poverty-stricken Dominican Republic. This exchange of information, which experts say is the main issue in current U.S. financial dealings with the Caribbean, to the degree demanded in the convention measure would adversely affect the bank secrecy in the islands that depend on discreet banking for a large part of their income.

## COLUMBIA

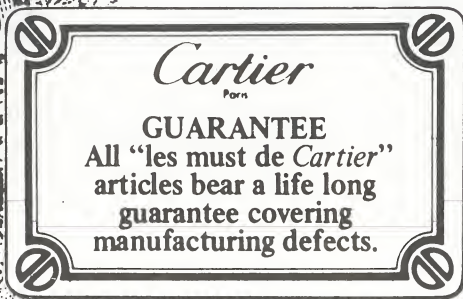
After university president James Holderman opened the conference most Caribbean leaders kept their remarks to general appraisals of the conference and the CBI. Prime Minister Don Martina, politically troubled at home, used the opportunity to criticize the CBI for not doing much for the small islands without raw materials and said it should be amplified, if it were to help create economic stability in those islands. He came up with the idea to do this and aid the troubled oil refineries in Curacao and Aruba, of which the last one has been called obsolete, by including some oil-products on the list of products that can be exported to the U.S. without paying import duty. Original as the idea may be, observers in South Caro-







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lina doubted if Congress would go along with any broad changes in the CBI at this stage. The conference was definitely a chance for the Antillean government to present its own case to a large number of foreign heads of state without the intermediary of Holland, and to be noticed by the U.S. government and public. Also, the Netherlands Antilles received approval by the CARICOM members for an observer status, which after it gains independence from Holland could bring it the advantages of a full membership.

### TEXTILE

Prime Minister Martina said a proposal by Jamaican Prime Minister Edward Seaga to include textile products onto the duty-free list could hold benefits for the Antilles as well, but the 35% added value rule on all finished or semi-finished products to be exported duty-free, according to the Antillean Plenipotentiary Minister in Washington Harold Henriquez, makes that a very small chance. Then there is also a pending measure that came out of the Commerce Department to avoid that Caribbean countries buy cheap textile from copuntries with importquotas on textile such as Hong Kong and after sowing them together exporting them to the U.S. market. So although the U.S. textile industry located in South Carolina let it be known that there is a lot of interest in moving to the Caribbean to escape high wages, the Caribbean countries will not be able to export to the U.S. textile products that are only put together on the islands using any other than U.S. material.

### STRATEGIC

The President in his speech to the Caribbean leaders in Columbia left no doubt as to where his real priorities lie. Using his by now well-known rethoric of communist infiltration, he hailed the U.S. efforts to bring "freedom and democracy" back to the region by supporting a guerilla war against Nicaragua and a regime in El Salvador that could hardly be called truly democratic. He also spoke of the "liberation" of Grenada as an example of the dangers that face the Caribbean and that make stronger strategic ties necessary. He talked about the CBI as a measure opening the U.S., "...o...sorry markets.... Hewas of the opinion that one should not criticize the CBI too much because it is the beginning upon which stronger economic ties will be built. What

he forgot to say was that Congress seems very reluctant to give the CBI real body. A mostly democratic congress at that, which is the reason why before coming to South Carolina Prime Minister Martina visited the Democratic Convention in Los Angeles, where he said he learned a lot about how American politics work.

### AFTERTHOUGHT

After the conference Don Martina said he was satisfied with a chance to talk to U.S. officials as part of a Caribbean group and that he felt this should be done each

year. According to him they had discovered many common interests and goals and a willingness with the U.S. officials to assist them in these. But his optimism to this reporter could not hide his underlying conviction that, although the conference was good for relations, it would almost certainly not provide the immediate results wanted in the way of economic measures to assure economic and political stability in the Caribbean in the near future. To achieve that goal, often expressed by U.S. officials and also by President Reagan during the conference, more than good intentions and rethoric are needed.

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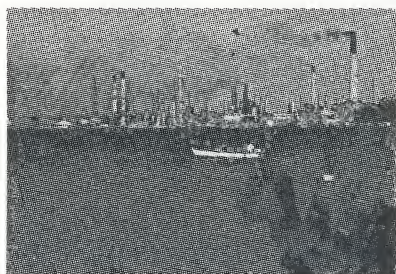






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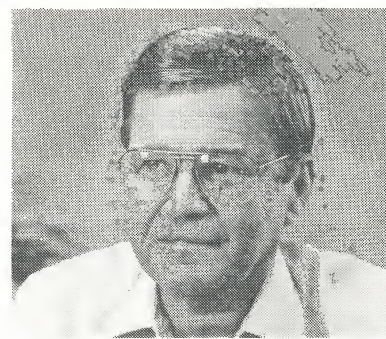
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# EVALUATING DEVELOPMENT AID



by Henk Timmer

The Dutch are widely known as a critical, no-nonsense and thrifty people. At the same time they rank high among the nations showing genuine concern for the developing countries. No less than 1.5% of their national income goes to development aid. Percentage wise that is twice as much as the USA is contributing! Even during the recent days of economic recession forcing an allround slimming down, cutting down on the 4 billion development aid was never considered.

The Dutch ideal of solidarity is an integral part of the Kingdom Charter. Article 36 of the so-called 'statuut' states that the Kingdom partners will help and assist each other whenever the need arises. Today the question is not whether the partners (i.e. Holland) will adhere to this lofty principle, but rather if the assistance given will serve its ultimate goal. In other words whether the structure of assistance is indeed functional.

## History

The need for assistance arose for the first time in the Antilles when in the late fifties automation of the oil refineries caused massive lay-offs and large capital investments were required to diversify the economy.

In 1962 a first so-called five year plan became effective. Projects for the development of tourism (the Aruven hotels) were financed by means of loans. A certain percentage of Dutch government bond issues were designated to the Antilles. Interest payments and even a proportional part of the expenses of the bond issue were the responsibility of the borrower. For infrastructural projects the Dutch provided aid: 50% as a grant and 50% as a soft loan at 3% interest.

The same system was used for a second five year plan ('67-'71). The third plan ('72-'76) did no longer provide for hard loans. At that time it was considered feasible that the Antilles should be able to ac-

quire sufficient funds through commercial financial channels. Aid for infrastructural purposes was adjusted to 40% grant and 60% soft loan. The interest, however, was reduced to 2.5% and a grace period of eight years introduced. This arrangement still applies. The concept of five year plans has, however, been left behind. In 1977 the two partners agreed that project financing should be replaced by programme-aid. The drawing up of a sensible development programme, it was felt, was needed and aid should be aimed at realizing such a programme.

But the discussions about Aruba's "status aparte", which by then were in full swing, made it impossible to develop any integrated plan for the six islands. Nor did any long term planning for the individual islands materialize. All energy was consumed by short time problem solving and in particular by the complicated questions concerning the constitution. The controversy between the Antilles and Holland about the independence issue, moreover, was not exactly helpful. Long term planning after all has to relate to future structures and as long as no consensus is reached about a target date for independence, all development plans remain vague.

## Maintenance

Presently aid is provided on a short term basis while some of the projects are of a long term nature. A good example are the programmes of the Fundashon Kas Popular in Curaçao and the Fundashon Cas pa Comunidad Arubano. Both organizations are involved in programmes ranging from building low cost housing to providing long term mortgages to private home builders. The aid received from Holland for these typically long term efforts is (artificially) cut up in portions to agree with the present system of project financing. There are of course advantages to that procedure.

Projects can be carefully scrutinized before aid is granted. On the other hand there is the danger that projects are agreed to without taking into account the consequences they may have for the island's government as regards for example maintenance. Also rather sudden and urgent projects may come up for which there is then no financing, as all available funds have already been allotted.

It might therefore be advisable to replace the present system with a programme of aid for both capital expenditure projects and socio-economic as well as educational projects. At the same time the island governments should be given more authority with regard to which programmes and what projects deserve priority treatment.

Limiting aid to projects is certainly not conducive to optimal development. After all once a project is completed it may seem to be over also with regard to development aid. The new harbour facilities in Aruba and Curaçao appear to be an excellent investment from a development-aid point of view. But it seems almost certain that in the first years the return will be very small. Consequently the interest burden will bear heavily on the respective island budgets. Until recently that would not have caused a serious problem. The income from the off shore sector in Curaçao and the windfall from Lago in Aruba during the period 1978-1983 took care of that. But that picture has changed rather drastically. To make up for the loss of income from those sources by increasing general taxes is out of the question. Income as well as corporate taxes are already higher than in most countries in the region. Moreover investments must be encouraged as much as possible and any tax increase would thus be counter-productive.

## Sources

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realized that need for assistance of the Antilles does not pose a problem to Holland as far as the financial aspect concerns. Dutch minister of Antillean affairs, Mr. J. de Koning confirmed this during his visit in August. What does pose a problem is whether that aid helps the islands to become more independent or makes them more dependent in the end. For that reason Mr. de Koning prefers project-financing rather than budget aid because the latter would necessitate a certain say of the Dutch in the budget preparation. And that, it is felt, goes against the grain of the Antillean autonomy.

But one way or other more assistance will be needed at least for a number of years. Sure enough the Dutch did increase the total amount of aid for the Antilles during this year with Dfl.40 million. But as the Antillean guilder is coupled to the US dollar this increase did little more than offset the losses incurred by the rise of the dollar. Only a few years ago the Dutch were contributing Dfl.175 million, which then amounted to Naf.135 million. After the above mentioned increase they are now assisting the Antilles with Dfl.215 million. In Antillean currency, however, that means today 120 million!

For starters extra funds will be needed to cover the costs of the transition from one entity to a separate Aruba and an Antilles of the Five. With a view to the on-going recession none of the island budgets

will be able to bear that brunt. The same argument applies to the issue of the solidarity fund purposed to guarantee the smaller islands the extra income needed to balance their budgets.

### Investment

What should also be considered when planning future assistance is the need to increase investment activity in the market sector. At the moment a lack of sufficient long term financing is curtailing the growth of the economy. With the reduced production levels at Lago and Shell and problems in several other enterprises, new investments must be promoted as much as possible. Investments in hotels are only feasible if at least 70% of the amount to be invested can be contracted as long term mortgage financing. Presently this is not possible. Foreign institutions are hesitant because of the imminent changes in the political structure and the local commercial banks have no funds for long term mortgage financing of large projects. Also the local government development-banks do not have sufficient funding yet for these types of loans.

Neither do they have the means to participate in the equity of larger projects. The government budgets do not allow sufficient transfer of government funds to development banks, so also for the proper funding of these newly started economic instruments development aid is necessary. These funds can be hard loans, for which Holland acts only as guarantor.

For this purpose the system used in the sixties could be reintroduced.

In brief that would imply substantiating the solidarity paragraph of the Kingdom Charter as follows:

#### 1. Development aid

Projects and programmes approved by both parties and limited by fixed or approximate amounts of grants and soft loans per project or per year or number of years. Additional cost to be carried by island budget. Total expenditure to be established for a period of five years, with flexibility of spending within the period.

#### 2. Development bank funding

Participation of the N.A. and Aruba in Dutch Government bond issues, for a limited amount per year and a total amount for a period of 20 years. The terms will be equal to the terms of the bond issue, so Holland acts only as the guarantor for the N.A. and Aruba. The funds will be used

for the Antilliaanse Ontwikkelingsbank and the Banco de Desarrollo Arubano to enable these development banks to play a major part in the development of the private sector.

### 3. Budget financing

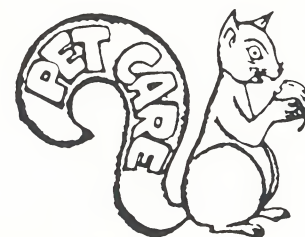
Participation of the N.A. or Aruba in Dutch Government bond issues, for a limited amount and only for temporary budget deficit financing after mutual agreement between Holland and the N.A. or Aruba about the conditions has been reached. The terms will be equal to the terms of the bond issue, so Holland acts only as the guarantor.

### Participation in the solidarity fund small island budget deficits

A grant equal to a percentage of the fund used to compensate the small islands (Saba, St. Eustatius, Bonaire and St. Maarten). Conditions to be established.

### 5. Special short term fund for restructuring the Netherlands Antilles.

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## SAVING

# THE QUEEN CONCH

*by Hubert Linkels*

During the month of October no less than 300,000 eggs of the Queen Conch, cultivated in a Bonaire laboratory will be planted in the waters around Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao. This massive infusion of the seas with what is locally called 'carcó' is part of a long term effort to save the shell-fish from extinction. Started in 1979 the project is a joint effort of the ABC-islands' governments. With a view to the up-coming status aparte of Aruba in 1986 it was recently decided to establish a foundation (Fundashon Marcultura) in order to assure future co-operation. The October action is the first visible result of four years of preparatory work in a laboratory created especially for that purpose on the Flamingo island.

Antilleans are great lovers of conch, both because of its exquisite taste and its reputation for enhancing one's sexual powers. Large heaps of empty shells at the shores of Bonaire's beautiful 'Lac' bay testify as to the volume of consumption. They also indicate an uncontrolled fishing industry, which, if not checked, would exterminate the fish altogether. During the past years full grown conch already became so scarce that fishermen began catching even the young ones before their ability to procreate had developed.

### Experiments

The alarming decline of the species in the entire Caribbean was discussed at a meeting of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute in 1979. Present at that meeting, which was held in Miami, was the Curaçao based marine biologist Dr. Wil Nagelkerken. As a result of the information Mr. Nagelkerken received at that conference the respective commissioners in charge of agriculture and fishery of the ABC islands decided to set up a working-group in order to develop a cultivation programme. Experiments by the American marine biologist Dr. W.N. Browhill on the Roques islands (Ven.) had shown the viability of such a project. Also in the Bahamas similar experiments had proven to be successful.

### Location

The best known spawning bed of the

Queen Conch is found at the earlier mentioned Lac Bay in Bonaire. For this reason it was decided to establish the laboratory on that island. It should, however, also be observed that the island government of Bonaire was the first to take protective measures with regard to endangered species. Spear fishing is prohibited and much has been done to save the unique 'lora', a South American parrot, from extinction.

Every reason, therefore, to locate the programme on that island. From the very beginning co-operation was established with the Rosenstiefschool of Marine and Atmospheric Science in Miami, as well as with the 'Wetenschappelijk Instituut voor Toegepast Natuurwetenschappelijk Onderzoek', the famous TNO in Delft, Holland.

### Set-back

In May 1982 the first cultivation process was started. The conch spawn in the period which lasts from May to October. Eggs were collected at a depth of 120 ft. near the Avis islands and brought to the Bonaire laboratory. After having been checked for the possible presence of parasites, the eggs were placed in 200 liter basins filled with germfree seawater.

*testifying to volume of consumption*







*enhancing sexual powers*

which was kept at a constant temperature of 27° C. At that stage the eggs are no larger than 0.1 millimetre! After five days the larvae are born and begin to move around. Although their light shell rapidly hardens, the larvae remain an easy prey for lobsters, crabs, cuttle fish and even birds for quite some time. The survival chances of the conch during the three years it takes to develop a really protective shell are 1 : 20,000,000! In the laboratory the rate has been improved to 1 : 20.

In spite of the ideal environment created in the laboratory the first experiment failed almost completely. Partly due to a current failure 250,000 eggs died. The following year (1983) proved to be much more successful. Last August 300,000 'carcós' had survived the first phase of their existence. These will now be placed in canasters at locations near Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao. This method is being used to protect the young queen conch from fishes of prey and also to trace their development.

#### Measures

Although the programme is still in an experimental phase, these first results are considered a major achievement. A next important step in safeguarding the carcó from extinction would be a two year moratorium on the fishing of the Shellfish. A proposal to that effect has recently been submitted by the project manager Rober R. Hensen, M.Sc. After those two years fishing would be allowed to resume, be it within certain limits. A number of spawning beds should be declared pro-

tected areas and the allowable volume of the carcó catch should be determined year by year, taking into account both economic and biological data.

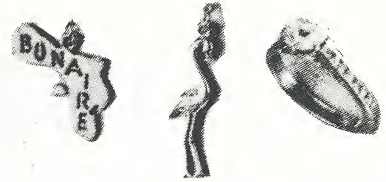
The creation of a foundation to assure the future of the programme must also be viewed as a major achievement of co-operation between the three islands. Plans are presently being developed to extend the cultivation experiment to other species. If successful, the economic implications for the islands might be considerable. In order to raise the necessary funds for broadening the programme, the

foundation Marcultura intends to approach the European Economic Community.

In anticipation of this development Mr. Hensen has already started a modest pisciculture. The initial success of the carcó project seems to warrant not only a continuation of the programme, but also a broadening of the project. ■

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# CURAÇAO: Zwitzerland of the Caribbean or....Haiti?

(Some options for the future)

by Michael Hopkins, ITEO

In September 1983 the International Monetary Fund drew attention to employment and public finance problems in the Netherlands Antilles. They felt that an excessive share of the increase in employment had taken place in nonproductive activities, be they inside the public sector or in overstaffing in a number of enterprises in the market sector. More recently available figures show that this observation may have been true up to 1980 but this is no longer the case, for the public sector in Curaçao at least. Government on Curaçao expanded employment by 7.6% and 5.1% in 1979 and 1980 but only by 1.3% and 0.1% in 1981 and 1982, respectively. On the other hand, the number of people working in the financial sector grew by 15.8% and 10.6% in 1981 and 1982. What was not known by the IMF in 1983, although they may have expected a change, was the repeal of the withholding tax provision in the USA-Netherlands Antilles tax treaty.

The impact of this repeal is not known in detail but the government of Curaçao may expect reduced profit tax earnings of the order of 40% (NAF 140 to NAF 180 million) around 1985. This is about 25% to 30% of government income in Curaçao. Since government is the largest employer in Curaçao it will probably have to cut back on employment to balance its budget. If we add to this situation the fact that the profits of the major companies are declining in Curaçao — of the companies employing more than 100 people in Curaçao 33% made a loss in 1982, 36% in 1983 and only 30% expect to improve their profit position in 1984 compared to 1983<sup>1</sup> — then the difficulties the IMF identified in 1983 begin to look insignificant compared to what may be the situation in 1985.

The unknown factor in all of this is the state of the public accounts on Curaçao. The IMF noted, at the end of 1983, that there was considerable uncertainty about

the range of foreseeable revenues and the level of spending in 1983 and, further, that the true condition of the public finances was hampered by the absence of medium-term projections. What was true nearly a year ago is still true today as the real situation of the public accounts for 1983 and 1984 is unknown. What is worrying is that, since the offshore companies have already paid profit taxes for last year (around 300 million NAF to Curaçao), the present island government accounts may look overly healthy. One hopes that the government is saving this money for the rainy day that seems imminent. This is because, by 1985, with profit taxes reduced, higher social security payments, and the need to support ailing companies (the Dock company, hotel sector, ALM) the cupboard may well be bare and even more serious problems could surface than those that have been seen to date. If this happens Curaçao is in danger of entering a downward spiral so that it eventually ends up as poor as Haiti rather than as rich as Switzerland.

## Options for the future

Given this black picture what options are there for the future of Curaçao? Clearly the government must make an assessment of all revenues, actual and expected, over the period 1984 to 1986. And it must identify all expenditures, both planned and expected. Then it must determine whether some of the projected expenditures could be diverted to areas that are dynamic enough to lead to a revival of the economy. It is essential, as the IMF reports emphasized, that the government (in particular the island government of Curaçao) obtains a clear and up-to-date picture of the real financial system. After all, individuals are not allowed to spend more than they earn unless they have a clear agreement with a bank, friend or neighbour. The Island Government cannot act differently without running into serious financial problems.

Unfortunately, it is not sufficient for the government to know how much money it has. It must also know what to do with it so that, in the future, the money spent now will generate more revenue or, at least, enough to meet the public's basic needs. This, as I write, is the 64 million dollar question. What activities are there that can assure the future of Curaçao? Oil refining, oil storage, ship repair, tourism, trade and offshore financing — the sources of the wealth of Curaçao in the past — are all declining.

A clue to future options can be obtained through looking at the six activities listed above. All of these activities used the comparative advantage that Curaçao can offer the rest of the world compared to other islands or small nation states. Oil refining, ship repair and trade could not have existed without geographical advantage. The deep water around Curaçao coupled with its geographical position — proximity to Venezuela and outside the hurricane belt — have given Curaçao almost unparalleled wealth in natural harbour facilities. Unfortunately the comparative advantage of the harbour in Curaçao has declined somewhat recently due to the growth in the construction of deep water ports and terminal facilities all around the Caribbean basin. This suggests that the harbour will not play such a key role in the future of Curaçao that it had in the past.

The harbour was one of the key items that led, in 1916 to the establishment of the Shell refinery. As Shell declines, relatively in terms of its contribution to employment and output, one must not forget that the wealth of Curaçao has been founded on the rise of Shell (Curaçao). Without the contributions of Shell to the economy the per capita income of Curaçao would probably not have been one of the highest in the Caribbean, nor would the infrastructure services such as roads, the airport, drainage, education, telecom-



munications have been as well developed as they are today. For example, from 1973 to 1982 Shell pumped into the local economy of Curaçao, over 2 billion NAF in terms of local payments (wages, social security, contract payments etc.) This is around 1600 NAF per year for every man, woman and child on the island of Curaçao. Arguably, therefore, in the absence of Shell (and Dutch aid) infrastructure facilities would not have existed in such abundance to have attracted the offshore sector.

If one thinks of what are the comparative advantages of Curaçao the following quickly spring to mind :

- (1) harbour and deep water facilities near to the coast
- (2) clear unpolluted sea
- (3) healthy, warm climate
- (4) consistent strong winds, yet outside the hurricane belt
- (5) well developed infrastructure (ports, telecommunications, roads, banks, international airport, schools, hospitals etc.)
- (6) above average educated and skilled workforce
- (7) proximity to Venezuelan coast
- (8) Polyglot population used to conducting trade (Dutch, Spanish, English widely spoken).

These eight items are the pillars upon which Curaçao has to capitalise. Below I shall propose a number of areas that could take advantage of these pillars. However before doing that account must be taken of the comparative disadvantages of Curaçao compared to its major competitors. These are:

- (1) Labour costs above average
- (2) Lack of many natural resources (beaches, water, mineral deposits, forests, attractive environment)
- (3) A rather complex bureaucracy including a lot of red tape for prospective investors
- (4) High social costs and, in particular, a labour law unfavourable to entrepreneurs
- (5) Geographic position not on main trading routes to U.S. nor near to other attractive islands
- (6) Lack of self-reliance due to dependence on external aid funds

It is obvious to say, but well worth saying anyway, that Curaçao must shape and develop its future economy on the basis of what it has — **comparative advantage**, and not on what it does not have — **comparative disadvantage**. In principle this means that Curaçao's geography coupled with its high local costs cannot compete, pricewise, with Latin American industry with its lower labour costs and general abundance of natural resources. In other words, Curaçao is relatively disadvantaged in the major areas of agriculture and industry and cannot, therefore, expect to use agricultural and industrial production as a basis for future growth.

This, in general, is because other countries can do the job more cheaply and more efficiently than Curaçao. There are exceptions of course, but these generally have to make use of Curaçao's comparative advantage coupled with high capital investment. To keep wages high the new capital investment must be the most advanced that money can buy in order that labour in Curaçao can both be highly productive and highly efficient compared to its competitors. All this implies that if Curaçao is to prosper it must develop high technology industries which can co-exist with high labour costs i.e. "high tec" not "low tec". To better understand this point of view let me take a number of sectors one by one.

#### (a) Agriculture

It is possible to develop some forms of agriculture in Curaçao. But, because of the scarcity of water and good soil, it cannot develop with low skill intensity and a low capital base. Hence agriculture is more or less forced, in Curaçao, to develop along high technology lines.

Almost anything will grow in Curaçao as long as it has adequate water and is protected from the wind. This means that things such as controlled growing under glass in order to preserve moisture or hydroponic cultivation or intensive fish farming can work. But "high tec" inevitably means high cost and poor labour absorption. It also means that, in the foreseeable future, Curaçao will not produce enough food itself to feed its own population. Simply because other countries can do it cheaper and more efficiently. On the other hand, feeding a population of 150,000 is not a major problem provided that other sectors are earning sufficient re-

venue from exports.

#### (b) Industry

By industry is meant those enterprises that produce something physical e.g. soap, nails, electricity, water, cement etc.. I exclude in this article any discussion of the oil sector mainly because that merits a long exposition. Suffice to say that the oil industry on Curaçao combines "high tec" with highly skilled labour plus it relies upon Curaçao's geography. This does not mean, however, that its future is secure — a high tec industry still has to compete internationally and make a profit.

Other industries to develop in Curaçao must rely, therefore, on high tec and high skill. It is difficult to imagine what these could be, given that high tec products, such as the computer assembly of micro-computers, is done in relatively low labour cost countries such as Taiwan, S. Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore (the so-called "gang of four"). One area of development that combines high tec with high skill and Curaçao's natural attributes is alternative energy products. Curaçao as a testing ground for products that develop energy from the wind, sun and waves is ideal. After all, if solar energy or wind energy cannot be made profitably in Curaçao it can hardly be made profitably anywhere else in the world (economy of scale considerations apart).

#### (c) Services

The service sector is the fastest growing sector in the developed part of the world. With highly productive computers and robotics increasingly available, the technological revolution is upon us and machines will soon be able to provide mankind with everything it requires — except jobs. The service sector in the world must (and will have to) use the surplus generated by the industrial sector to provide the necessary employment that people desire. For example, there is no reason why there cannot be one teacher per four pupils (say) as long as the surplus being created by machines is being distributed fairly.

This suggests, and the comparative advantage of Curaçao implies, that the future of Curaçao lies in the provision of services to the rest of the world. We have



already seen the rise of the offshore sector. This experience has given some people in Curaçao the chance to obtain financial expertise, hence adding to the comparative advantage of Curaçao and the chance to further develop the financial services it can offer. Again, what these may be are as yet unknown. Added impetus to this sector can be given through information technology. This is an area where Curaçao must expand. Curaçao could become a centre of information for the Caribbean and Latin America, if it steps on the bandwagon quickly enough — a "silicon island" is possible here. This possibility exists because of the developed infrastructure of Curaçao and its proximity to the U.S. It is essential, however, that the higher education institutes are supported in this endeavour and it is important that the education given to the young is relevant for their future. This may mean that an apple for the teacher is not enough — there must also be an Apple in every classroom!

Curaçao has always been a trading nation. However, it is in an unfavourable geographic position compared to Miami or Panama. The larger part of Curaçao's imports arises from the East (Europe) or North (USA) and passes by Panama or Miami from where it is distributed to Curaçao. Therefore the regions east of Panama and north of Curaçao are not interested in the goods Curaçao transships because the ships calling at Curaçao have already been to those parts. Further, Europe is not very interested in Curaçao as a transshipment port to Latin America because it is more expensive than direct connections. However, Curaçao is in a favourable position to collect goods from South America and ship or fly them to Europe, the U.S.A. and the Caribbean.

Latin America regions must, over the next 2 years or so, export much more than they import in order to pay off their debts. Because they are relatively unsophisticated exporters Curaçao may well have a chance to capture some of this trade. To do this connections between S. America and Curaçao have to be improved, perhaps through the provision of ships operated by Curaçao interests. This would have the added advantage of convincing importers of the need to take advantage of the relatively cheap food products of Latin America compared to the existing supply lines (largely USA and Holland).

#### (d) Tourism

Tourism cuts across all sectors in the economy. It can provide jobs for a lower investment cost than almost all other industries. However, tourism generally thrives when a country has a comparative advantage in outstanding natural beauty, low labour costs, well developed cultural activities, places of historical interest and nearness to a mass market. Curaçao can only partially offer any of these items. In particular, mass tourism in the Caribbean area is attracted by climate and excellent beaches.

Aruba can offer these but Curaçao only the climate. One might even argue that if Aruba can be convinced to stay within the Netherlands Antilles, that Aruba (and St. Maarten) continue to be developed for tourism and Curaçao for commercial activities. This would maximise the comparative advantage of the Antilles as a whole. And when tourism is having a poor time Curaçao could help the other islands and vice versa.

Tourism does have a place in Curaçao but, I believe, only for tourists interested in special activities — **specialised tourism**. Curaçao beneath the waves is a wonderland of beauty, its average wind velocity throughout the year is high, its climate warm and sunny — this makes it ideal for developing sport activities such as scuba diving, windsurfing, sailing and tennis. People are more and more becoming interested in physical fitness and this trend will continue, Curaçao is ideal to enhance this. As a centre of excellence for sporting visitors Curaçao has a future, as a centre for mass tourism requiring good beaches and strong cultural facilities the prospects are poor.

#### Conclusion

There is no quick solution to the crisis facing Curaçao. This article has attempted to delineate one or two options that, if seeded now, could pay dividends in the medium term (3 to 5) years ahead). The financial resources gained from the offshore boom as well as those generously given by Dutch (and EEC) aid are still available and can be used to exploit the comparative advantage that Curaçao has. If these funds are dissipated into activities that have no forward productive potential then Curaçao is only postponing the day

of reckoning. The trade unions must be closely involved in the process of planning the future since, in the short term, the burden of adjustment will fall on employment as it has done to date. If the trade unions can see that short term sacrifice is likely to lead to improved levels of living and employment in the future, then they may be convinced that short term schemes to prop up employment, whatever they may be, might not be in their best long term interest. ■

1. The author is giving technical assistance to SEP (The Social Economic Planning Bureau of Curaçao) in preparing the '86-'88 socio-economic plan for the island Government. The views expressed here are personal and not necessarily those of ITEO (Institute for Applied Economic Research), or SEP.
2. Source: Preliminary estimates from the June, 1984 Business Survey of the Inter-Departmental Working Group (IDW).
3. Defined as: "The principle that, since every country produces some things more efficiently than others it will be better off if it specializes in those items it produces most efficiently, exporting them and importing those it does not produce as efficiently".
5. Again under the assumption of a high cost economy. If the economy of Curaçao crashes to the level of that of Haiti (say) it would be forced to develop agriculture. It may be able, as a low cost economy, to do this — but Haiti is a poor example of being able to feed its people.
6. 147644 in 1982 — SEP ITEO estimates.
7. Apple is the trademark of one of the largest home computer manufacturers. The avowed intent of the founder of Apple was to give, free of charge, a microcomputer to every school in the USA. The marketing implications of such a ploy are obvious but the educational intent was, nevertheless, praiseworthy.
8. I am grateful to Andres Casimiri for providing me with these arguments.
9. But see, "The High Costs of Shipping: A Critical Report", *Antillean Review*, Vol. 2 No. 1, Dec. '81/Jan '82. ■

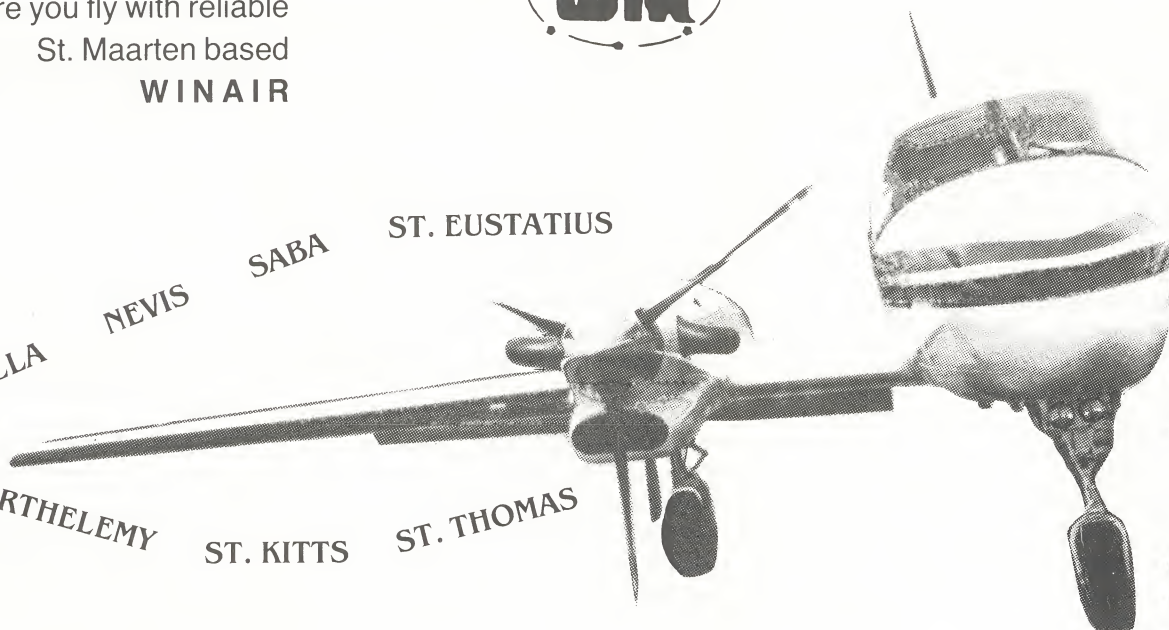


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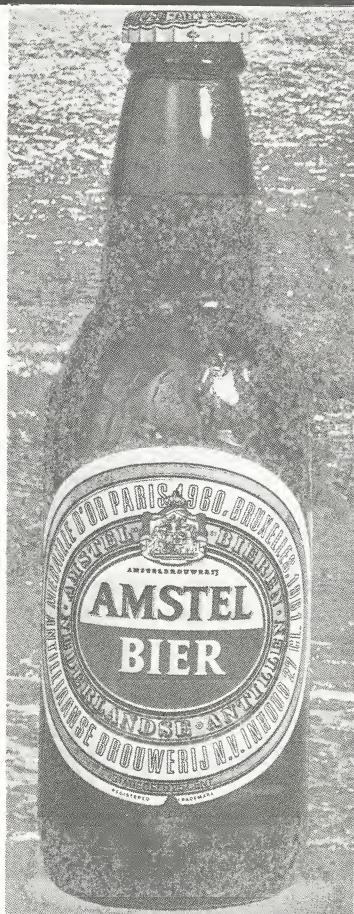
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# ST MAARTEN GOES OFF-SHORE

The occasion was both splendid and significant. Among the many guests were the Governor of the Netherlands Antilles, the Dutch Minister of Antillean Affairs and a score of wellknown faces from the financial world. The party's setting in a picturesque alley, dressed up like a side-walk café in front of its *raison d'être*, could not fail to make the night a success. But the conclusion to be drawn from what the evening stood for, the official inauguration of CITCO's new St. Maarten offices, indicates a much more lasting and successful development for the island itself.

Only a few months earlier Dr. Claude Wathey, St. Maarten's undisputed political leader for more than thirty years, addressing a seminar of the International Tax Planning Association, announced that the island's government policy was directed at promoting St. Maarten for Off-Shore banking purposes. A 17 million guilder telephone expansion programme, he said, was underway in order to create an adequate infrastructure. CITCO's setting-up offices in the island, which is probably the most booming tourist resort in the Caribbean, shows his government policies to be successful. With CITCO, PIERSON, HELDRING & PIERSON, DE NEDERLANDSE CREDIET BANK and a number of smaller trust companies established on the island, St. Maarten is rapidly developing into an international financial centre.

## CITCO

The stylish opening of the new offices also signifies a rapid development of CITCO itself. During the past five years the renowned trust company established offices in Tortola (79), Amsterdam and Rotterdam (80), New York (82) and Panama (83). On September 15 CITCO will open up yet another new office, this time on St. Thomas one of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Already established in Curaçao and Aruba the company will then be active in eight different locations, but what is much more important, in a number of different jurisdictions. Rumors that this spread of activities in particular in the Caribbean region signals a shift of accent from Curaçao to elsewhere were denied by CITCO officials. The company's headquarters in Curaçao is expected to see an increase of work with regard to technical and administrative assistance required by the subsidiaries on the above mentioned islands.

## Hong Kong

Dr. Claude Wathey, who officiated at the opening on St. Maarten, used the opportunity to announce another promising development related to the off-shore business. "In recent months", he said, "much time has been spent working on yet another source of income and stability for the island". Mr. Wathey proceeded to inform his listeners about ongoing negotiations with a Canadian based Finance Company with strong ties in Hong Kong, which might lead to substantial investments by Hong Kong businessmen in a so-

called Permanent Residence Investment Programme. In a conversation with A.R. Dr. Wathey explained that a considerable part of the estimated US \$100 million would be earmarked for housing projects. The programme would provide the Hong Kong investors with legal residence and travel documents. In spite of recent assurances given by mainland China with regard to the future status of Hong Kong many businessmen in the British colony



*mocking other islands*

see a need for establishing residence elsewhere.

Obviously happy to make this positive announcement, Mr. Wathey mocked the other islands, in particular Curaçao, which is planning to send a rather large delegation to Hong Kong to see if any business can be attracted, when he said: "it is well-known that no one simply walks into Hong Kong and finalizes business of the magnitude that we are talking about. Without contacts only the cuisine of Hong Kong can be sampled, not its business! As far as St. Maarten goes, Mr. Wathey certainly had a point: its carefully built up contacts in the world of international finance are beginning to pay off.





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Foreign reserves with the Central Bank increased in July owing to profit tax transfers by the two oil refineries, but compared with last year a deficit of f.93 million occurred. Prospects for the remaining months of 1984 will largely depend on the level of government spending. The economy continued its downward trend. All sectors encountered difficulties. Shell Curaçao recorded an operational loss during the first half of 1984. Lago Aruba was able to show a profit, although far less than in previous years. The national airline and the drydock company faced liquidity deficits and had to ask financial assistance from the government. The repeal of the 30% withholding tax on U.S.A. portfolio interest paid to foreign investors severely damaged the prospects of the offshore sector. Accordingly the employment situation, which already had to suffer the effects of the Bolivar devaluation, deteriorated further. In particular on Curaçao the number of jobless increased and is estimated at 28 percent or a total of about 17,000 at the end of this year. Such a situation requires special attention to avoid any possible social unrest. However, the current circumstances are very complex because of the political deadlock resulting in the resignation of the Martina cabinet and of the future constitutional status of the islands.

#### Foreign reserves

In July the two oil refineries had to pay their profit tax amounts. Shell Curaçao paid the required minimum of about f.32 million, which had to be paid despite the refinery's recording operational losses. Lago Aruba paid an amount of f.48 million, which is considerably less than last year, when an amount of f.132 was due. These amounts had to be transferred in foreign exchange from banking accounts. In July 1984 foreign reserves with the

Central Bank increased only by f.29.5 millions to a level of f.275 million. This is far below last year's level, when at the end of July a growth of f.82 million was recorded to a total of f.367.9 million. Consequently foreign reserves with the Central Bank fell f.93 million on an annual basis.

This is a remarkable change, since in the months of March, April and May the balance of payments still showed yearly surpluses. In June a small deficit of f.1.5 million was recorded. The balance of payments deficit, which is estimated to amount to at least f.60 million for 1984, reflects not only the weak state of the economy, but also the high level of spending by the Central and the Island Governments. This is clearly demonstrated by the fall in the island governments' deposits with the Central Bank. These deposits are maintained for a large part by the island of Aruba. The total amount fell from f.152 million to f.51 million. This amount will probably be spent during the remaining months of this year, which will add to the already existing deficit in the balance of payments.

#### Inflation

The consumer price index increased very modestly in May by only 0.1 percent. At the end of May the index amounted to 103.3 percent compared with October 1982 = 100 percent. Since January 1984 inflation reached a level of 1.2 percent. During the period April/May 1984 major price increases were recorded in the categories food and stimulants of 0.3 and 0.4 percent respectively. The other categories showed minor increases of 0.1 or 0.2 percent. There were no decreases recorded. However, in the categories clothing, shoes, housing and recreation the price level appeared unchanged.

#### Interest rates

Interest rates on the domestic capital market had not changed very much at the end of July 1984. According to a publication of the Department of Economic Affairs the local banks in general paid an interest rate of 5 percent on savings accounts. On 12-months fixed term deposits to an amount of f.10,000 an interest rate between 5 3/4 and 7 percent was offered. Usually no interest is paid on credit balances in current accounts.

The banks charged 12 percent, and some even 13 percent, on mortgage loans. The prime rate on overdrafts was not published but was about 11 percent. Consumer loans, such as instalment credits and personal loans, are generally granted after deducting a discount of 12 percent which sometimes equals an interest of more than 20 percent per annum.

Since October 1983 a credit restriction on consumer loans requested by the Cen-



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tral Bank has been in force. Total outstandings per bank or finance company may not exceed the end of October 1983 amount. However, this restriction has not affected the interest rates so far. The effective interest rates on domestic government bonds increased to 11.24 percent. These bonds are traded by the local banks and quoted in the daily newspapers. Treasury paper offered an effective interest rate of 7.87 percent p.a. for 3 months and 9.29 percent on 12 months paper.

### Employment

The number of jobless has grown by about 4 percent on Curaçao this year. In particular the sectors trade and hotels recorded a substantial loss of labour opportunities. The financial problems of the ALM and the Drydock, as well as the operational losses sustained by Shell Curaçao, will add to this unfavourable situation. Also the offshore sector will be hurt by the repeal of the withholding tax in the U.S.A.

The 1981 census calculated the jobless at 20 percent against 14 percent in 1972. The number of unemployed has increased gradually and will probably reach 28 percent or a total of about 17,000 persons. Young people at the age between 15 and 24 years constitute a large part of the unemployed. In 1981 20 percent of the unemployed were in this age group. The aspect that these graduates leave school without any prospect of employment has disturbed the labour unions, the employers and the government, but up till now very few measures have been taken. The employers are asking for an improvement of the investment climate and a change in the current dismissal law, which the labour unions object to. Government seems paralyzed by the political machinations of forming a new cabinet and the prospect of possibly accelerated elections. Another problem is the coming constitutional change that takes a lot of time, effort and money which could better be spent on improving economic conditions and alternatives as well as creating labour opportunities.

### Shell Curaçao

Shell Curaçao recorded a very unfavourable first half of 1984. The total operational loss during this period amounted to f.65 million, whereas for the entire year 1983 a loss of f.42 million had

been sustained. The gross margin, i.e. the difference between the purchase price of crude and the selling price of the oil products, accounted for this development. The rationalization program and the cost-cutting measures are giving the necessary results and will be continued.

The gross margin amounted to f.394 million for 1983 and fell to f.142 during the period January / June 1984. Total expenses including depreciation, interest and tax amounted to f.207 million compared with f.436 million for 1983. The rationalization plan is aimed at reductions of both wages and expenses for material, while also the losses of crude and oil products have been held at a minimum. Prospects for the second half of 1984 are not yet clear, but the refinery indicated that the operational loss for 1984 will be higher than in 1983.

### Lago Aruba

The Lago Oil refinery reduced its personnel by about 40 percent since the beginning of this year. During the first half of 1984 a positive operational result had been recorded, but Lago did not disclose the profit amount. The refinery will continue to operate more competitively. The management stated that the bad publicity about the possible closing of the plant had created disturbing symptoms among staff and workers.

The refinery has been operating at a capacity of more than 200,000 barrels a day which is more than was expected. The crude was bought from Venezuela and Mexico at high international market


prices. Thus despite the high volume of daily through-put and the reductions in wages and salaries the net profit appeared to be disappointing, owing to increasing purchase prices of crude. In the past crude had been obtained at lower contract prices.

In the meantime the refinery continued to execute the rationalization program adopted last year. Some units were broken down and on other places less personnel was involved. The plan mentioned at the beginning of the year to rebuild and reorganize the refinery to produce more and variable products was rejected.

### ALM

The national airline ALM has asked its foreign creditors to postpone the semi-annual redemptions. ALM is willing to transfer the interest payments, but its liquidity position is not sufficient to redeem the outstanding debt to Mc Donnell Douglas, Hercules International Trade and the Export-Import Bank of the United States. The loan was granted in October 1982 to finance the purchase of two DC-9-80 airplanes for an amount of f.73 million. The Central Government issued a guarantee for this loan. ALM has to pay about f.7.5 million twice a year for redemption and interest payment. Next payment is due in September. Last year the Central Government already had to render financial assistance to enable the ALM to pay its maturing liabilities. In March of this year the national airline used its bank credit.

The postponement was asked for two years, which is the same period stated in



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the rationalization plan to reduce expenses with a view to a break-even result. The Central Government being the sole shareholder hired several consultants to execute this program. The consultants were also asked to mediate in order to solve the financial situation.

### Curaçao Drydock Company

The only alternative to save the Drydock is to lay off 245 workers, if the island government of Curaçao is not able to grant further financial assistance. The Drydock asked for a subsidy of f.14 million after last year's reorganisation plan did not bring the expected results. The island government replied that all the alternatives will be studied and that the money is not immediately available because of its own poor financial situation.

The management appeared not to be in favour of further cuts in salaries after last year's reduction of 23 percent. The labour union agreed that the reorganization had not brought the desired results, but objected to the lay off and convened a meeting during working hours. For fear of further actions the Central Government offered the services of its labour mediator, who started activities immediately.

### Offshore sector

The repeal of the 30% withholding tax on portfolio interest paid to foreign investors was finally approved in the U.S.A. The bill repealed the tax for borrowings issued after enactment of the legislation. The offshore business has been severely damaged by this measure, which will affect employment and foreign exchange revenue as well as tax income. Nevertheless the first reactions of the offshore officials were restrained. Although the disadvantages are evident for the Antilles, some are optimistic about the point of time that they will come into effect. A period of at least 7 years was even mentioned before the revenues will start to reduce.

Furthermore bonds issued in the U.S.A. are not bearer bonds as is common use in the euro-dollar market. There also appears to be a regulation in the U.S.A. that a withholding tax of 20% has to be levied in case interest is paid to foreigners, unless it is sure that the receiver is not an U.S.A. resident, with other words the bondholder has to give evidence of his/her identity.

Condensed balance sheet Central Bank; f millions

end of	July '84	June '84	May '84	April '84
<b>Assets</b>				
Gold stock	41.4	41.4	41.4	41.4
Foreign reserves	275.0	245.5	265.9	287.0
Loans to:				
— fed. government	99.0	106.7	103.8	100.8
— isl. governments	—	30.6	19.6	—
— banks	—	1.1	0.8	4.9
— others	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
sundry assets	6.6	6.7	6.6	6.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>423.0</b>	<b>433.0</b>	<b>439.1</b>	<b>441.4</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>				
Banknotes	171.7	180.0	172.4	177.0
Deposits held by:				
— tax collector	8.7	7.0	9.7	9.3
— isl. governments	50.9	60.6	57.5	63.0
— Giro Curacao	6.7	6.7	—	—
— banks	65.2	68.7	81.9	65.3
— developments projects	19.5	12.5	23.0	29.0
— other residents	22.4	17.6	16.2	21.5
— non-residents	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.8
sundry liabilities	13.6	15.6	13.8	11.7
<b>Capital and Reserves</b>	<b>63.8</b>	<b>63.8</b>	<b>63.8</b>	<b>63.8</b>

In the coming months there will be renewed interest in the renegotiation of the twenty year old tax-treaty between the U.S.A and the Antilles. Contrary to expectations the U.S. Treasury did not terminate the treaty unilaterally before the yearly deadline of June 30. In the past three years of renegotiating the issue of

exchange of information appeared to be a major obstacle. The U.S.A will certainly press for more exchange of information, which is not in the interest of the Antilles. In particular the offshore sector is afraid that the U.S.A. officials may use the information received when negotiating with third party countries. ■

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## U.S. CONSUL GENERAL

## Tom Coony:

*INTERACTION TO INCREASE*

## INTERVIEW

**He talks fast, formulates well and knows his business. A dynamic personality he is at the same time pleasantly devoid of that American aggressiveness, which so often and rightly irritates the foreigner. In brief US Consul General Tom Coony is well suited for the job he holds.**

**Just over a year ago Mr. Coony took over from Miss Alta Fowler and the obvious conclusion to be drawn from these successive appointments of capable career diplomats is a heightened interest in and greater recognition of the Netherlands Antilles in Washington.**

A conclusion Mr. Coony confirms, when he comments on the relationship between the USA and the Antilles. "The US", he says, "is becoming increasingly interested in the region". But he also observes a growing realization in the Netherlands Antilles that co-operation between the two countries can be of great mutual benefit. "Interaction", he strongly believes, "is going to increase". A process Mr. Coony is obviously happy to promote to the best of his abilities.

**Career**

Looking younger than his age (47) Mr. Coony feels strongly about public service, calling it of "great intellectual stimulation". The wide variety of service and the opportunity to travel and live in other places clearly have great appeal to him. Discussing his career the enthusiasm about his chosen profession becomes very understandable. Every time his foreign assignments took him to places where history was in the making. First it was Spain, which in the late sixties was rapidly approaching the end of the Franco era. The first signs of discontent with the dictator's regime were beginning to come out

in the open. "Because of the insignificance of the job I then held, I found myself very close to what happened." People shared their opinions readily with him, which was no doubt helped by the fact that Mr. Coony had made himself familiar with the Spanish language.

Next it was Pakistan, where he arrived a year before the outbreak of the 1971 war, which led to the birth of Bangladesh. Thus he was witness to the most important development in that part of the world since independence was wrested from England by Mahatma Gandhi. In 1975 Mr. Coony found himself in Greece, where a year before the junta had fallen. "I belonged to the first group of Americans who came in untainted by association with the junta. There was a unique spirit on both sides to build up relations". Again what must have been greatly to his advantage was that he learned to master Greek before he went out to that ancient country.

His knowledge of languages, which includes besides those mentioned above also Portuguese, and his analytical way of thinking are probably the reason why he spent 10 out of his 17 years with the Foreign Service as a desk officer in Washington, serving at the desks of Pakistan, Greece and Brasil.

Then last year the Netherlands Antilles came up. "I competed for the job for two reasons", says Mr. Coony, who proceeds to give three. First of all he calls the appointment professionally interesting as the region is very much in the limelight. Secondly, he says with a smile, "it's fun to be your own boss". And then he adds, "it is a delightful place in which to live".

**Tax treaty**

Discussing US - Antillean relationship, Mr. Coony expresses as his opinion that the existing ties between the

two countries will be significantly strengthened in the coming years. Unavoidably the recent repeal of the 30% withholding tax on interest paid to investors in US securities comes up in the conversation (see AR. Vol. 4 - No. 3). The Consul General views the final outcome of the matter "not as damaging as it potentially could have been". He points out that one should not forget that "the tax industry here just developed. It was never the intention of the US withholding tax legislation. However, when it became clear that the withholding had served its US purpose, there was at the same time recognition of the potential negative influence the repeal might have on the Netherlands Antilles". For that reason the Antilles were allowed a grace period of seven years with regard to all bonds issued through the Antilles until the date of repeal.

Concerning the renegotiating of the tax-treaty between his country and the Netherlands Antilles, Mr. Coony sounds fairly optimistic. He feels that everybody now wishes to arrive at conclusions. "We were very close already", he states, expecting that a revised treaty should be concluded within a reasonable time span. He once more points out that the USA had some legitimate concerns with regard to the existing treaty for as much as it might provide loopholes for US-tax evasion and the laundering of illegally gained money. But Mr Coony continues expressing also as his opinion that there are good reasons to uphold the principle of bank secrecy in the Antilles. "A revised tax-treaty", he says, "should meet these two legitimate concerns". A statement, which even if it does not reflect more than his own personal opinion, sounds hopeful.

**C.B.I.**

The heightened US interest in the



Caribbean region expresses itself, according to Mr. Coony, in a sincere concern about the area's economic difficulties. For this he cites two reasons. One, there is a potential for unrest and secondly democratic governments tend to grow in a stable economic climate. It is these interests, he says, which are behind the Caribbean Basin Initiative. He mentions two principles of the initiative as of great importance. Promoting a diversification of the islands' economies is one of them. The other one is the strong accent placed on the role of the private sector. In this respect he speaks with appreciation about the efforts of the Antillean private sector using the Chamber of Commerce to reach out for new business abroad. He mentions in particular the intended Far-East mission by Curaçao's Chamber of Commerce.

It is no secret, however, that many view the Caribbean Basin Initiative as of little advantage to the Netherlands Antilles. The provisions giving certain benefits to countries exporting to the USA do not apply for the simple reason that the Antilles is not an exporting country. The oil products which it does export are, on the other hand, not included in the tax-favourable regulations of the C.B.I. As a result there is a fair bit of scepticism towards the C.B.I. in the Netherlands Antilles.

Mr. Coony, on his part, made some interesting remarks displaying an innovative mind. He agreed that the C.B.I. is primarily aimed at countries which are in the possession of raw materials. The Antilles are not, he assents, but they do possess a remarkable pool of varied expertise. The possibilities for more capital and expertise intensive projects, he feels sure, do exist. That is why regional co-operation should be promoted!

What Mr. Coony seems to imply is that the Netherlands Antilles is in a position to contribute to the development of the Caribbean by virtue of its in-house know-how. If this could be put to use on a regional level, he says, "it would be a good effect of the Caribbean Basin initiative.

## Drugs

On the maps of international drug-trafficking the connecting supply-lines always touch the islands of the Netherlands Antilles. Says Mr. Coony: "the issue is of great importance to us because of the negative influence both on individuals and society". The trade, he



states, "corrupts user and producer countries alike".

Only a few months ago the Antillean Attorney General, Mr. L.R. Nahr, was honoured in a most exceptional manner by his American colleague Mr. William French Smith for the co-operation given to the U.S.A. in battling this devastating phenomenon. "The Netherlands Antilles", Mr. Coony confirms, "have been particularly helpful. In 1982 our Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) opened up offices here in Curaçao and that has proved to be mutually advantageous". For obvious reasons he declines to go into details. He is happy, however, to report on the help given by the DEA people to anti-drug programmes organized in the Antilles.

A recent such programme in Bonaire, which shows disturbing signs of widespread drug abuse, was supplied by the consulate's DEA staff both with materials and advice.

## Identity

Talking about his work in the Netherlands Antilles, Mr. Coony declares: "I regard my job as an opportunity to strengthen healthy relations between the U.S.A. and the Antilles". For that purpose he endeavours to step up visiting and cultural exchange programmes. "The re-

cent visits of Prime-Minister Don Martina to the U.S.A. are important", he explains, "with a view to establishing an own identity of the Netherlands Antilles. The country is often seen as Dutch. Of course the relation between Holland and the Netherlands Antilles is unique. Unless you study the documents, however, you don't realize how independent the Antilles really is". He confides that Washington reported most favourably on Martina's presence at the meeting of Caribbean leaders with President Reagan in South Carolina last July (see National). Likewise the visit of US Congressmen to Curaçao in connection with the pending withholding tax legislation appeared to be most enlightening to the American decision makers, which in turn had a positive effect on the deliberations.

A great lover of travelling, Mr. Coony knows from experience how much can be learned from getting to know each other's situation on the spot.

He himself has wasted no time during the first year acquainting himself with the six Antillean islands, their people and even their language Papiamentu. His genuine interest in the people to whom he represents his country is, no doubt, the reason why he was so quickly felt to belong. ■



# THE AMERICAN PRESENCE IN CURAÇAO

by Nancy Siegenthaler

The American Consulate in Curaçao estimates that 2,000 U.S. citizens currently live in the Netherlands Antilles. Of that number, about 300 live in Curaçao, according to consulate records, but registration there is strictly voluntary. The registration periods, in addition, are every five years, so that if a registered American leaves the island before that time — without telling the consulate — his name is still listed in their registry. Due to U.S. privacy laws, names of registered Americans are withheld, so an up-to-date, accurate 'headcount' is unobtainable.

For this report, Antillen Review polled a sample of 50 Americans — all of them living and working in the Netherlands Antilles' most populated island, Curaçao.

The majority of Americans polled said they had moved to Curaçao to settle down. Many have married into Antillean families, and have grown roots, raised families, and have helped to build-up businesses. American wives invariably moved to the island because their husband's employment was here. American men, on the other hand, originally came to the island for the same reasons that continues to attract temporary, American workers — career advancement.

"I like my work here," "The job is right, and it pays well," "Professionally, it's very challenging," "It was a step up," and "It looks good on a resumé to have international experience" were comments frequently heard.

Of the Americans in AR's survey, none were part of a large group brought in by a sole employer. On the contrary, they are scattered throughout Curaçao's economy. A sprinkling of Americans work in Curaçao's hotels, and its airline; not many more work in retailing, the food industry, and at the International School; a small handful work in the off-shore and banking

*How extensive is the American presence in Curaçao? — What attracts Americans here, and why do many of them choose to stay? How do Americans view its future, and how are they influencing it?*

*To find the answers to these and other questions, Antillen Review polled United States citizens this summer, and found general agreement on a number of points.*

industries, and in advertising. Americans are scarcely in evidence at Shell, or at the Curaçao Oil Terminal. The companies in Curaçao that employ the most Americans are GTE Finance, with five American employees, and the Price Waterhouse Accounting firm, with seven employees.

Caroline D'Otreppe  
President, American Women's Club



While Americans' Monday-through-Friday destinations differ, their opinions of the island's economy converge. Americans sampled by AR say Curaçao's economy is in for some rough years, and that sacrifices are inevitable for its return to health. Nearly all agree, however, that there is solid potential for a healthy, Curaçao economy in the future, citing the island's geography, its harbour, its climate and its skilled labour force.

"The government is going to have to give a great deal of thought to what Curaçao wants to be," said one American manager. "There is tremendous potential here."

Obstacles to economic recovery, Americans said, include bureaucratic blocks, high labour costs and the absence of raw materials. These reasons, they said, may keep American investors at bay. None of the Americans polled said they would invest in private enterprises in Curaçao at this time. The reasons they cited were the high costs of basics (electricity, telephone service, water, housing), bureaucracy, protectionism, anti-competitive pricing practices, steep tariffs and high wage costs. The majority of Americans polled generally were not optimistic about the island's immediate, economic future. In discussing possible solutions for its troubled economy, one pillar of Curaçao's traditional economy never went unscathed — tourism. That Curaçao's tourist industry needs an overhaul was a ubiquitous sentiment. "The tourism industry really needs a lot of work," was an often-heard remark. Americans consistently cited poor service in Curaçao's hotels, and shops alike.

"The salesgirls in the stores have a terrible attitude," said one. "But I don't know if you can change people's mentality in just a few years."

"Tourism always came easy for Curaçao in the past," said an American



woman who married into an Antillean family. "They never had to really work at it. Now, they have to think harder about tourism — that's something they never thought about before."

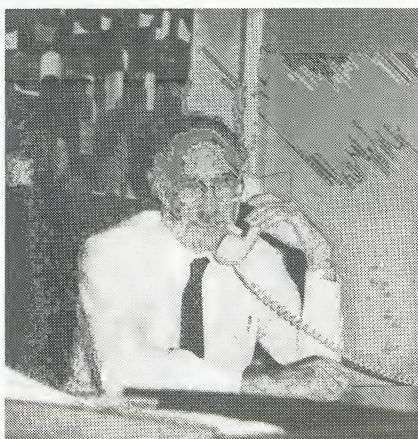
"Why are Aruba's service people friendlier?" was also, commonly asked by Americans in AR's poll.

The island's tourist industry, said the American respondents, needs more entertainment, as well. Movies and live theatre was suggested, especially for the evening hours, to attract more American tourists.

They also recommended patrol for the beaches to regularly clean up accumulated garbage. "The garbage problem is incredible," said one businessman. "There are landfills, and free dumping privileges, but they'll still dump where they're not supposed to dump," he said.

Taking all aspects into account, most of the Americans polled say their attraction to the island is due to their jobs, the island's climate, the sea that surrounds it, the ease of participating in outdoor sports, the relaxed pace of life, the low crime rate, and the general friendliness of the people.

"Overall, I've found the people to be



Charles Yarbough  
Finance Manager, Henderson

very, very friendly," said one American businessman, echoing a prevalent opinion. "They're incredibly helpful," said another, "The colour of one's skin is irrelevant down here." "You meet people from all over the world... and develop an international outlook on things," said an American office worker, "instead of seeing things from only one perspective." "I've gained so much in knowing the people," said an American artist. "I think they're very well educated," said an

American manager. "And they have a very good knowledge of world events." "One plus," said a long-time resident, "is that there's no violence at all. I've never felt endangered here."

Curaçao's untroubled ambiance is a major reason why many Americans have decided to make it their home.

"It's easy to raise children here," and "Curaçao is a safe place for kids," were common remarks. The abundance of sunshine, open spaces, and other children were routinely listed by American parents as advantages to staying. "Having your children exposed to so many different cultures and racial groups," said one American parent, "it would be hard to raise a prejudiced child in Curaçao."

The high standard of education was also cited as another of the island's attributes. More than half of the Americans polled considered Curaçao's grade-school education system superior to that of the United States.

The majority of Americans polled are quick to point out the high quality of life they enjoy, as opposed to the quality in many of America's cities. Driving time to one's office is limited; traffic jams are



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practically nonexistent; domestic help is affordable; the drinking water is pure and the air is clean. Living in a small community has its advantages, too, they say. "If your car breaks down," said one American woman, "you can usually find someone you know to help you."

Of the aspects of Curaçao life, however, none has been harder for Americans to adjust to than the rate at which things are done. "As opposed to the United States, where you'd ask for something and you'd get it in 10 minutes, down here, you kind of learn to expect that it might be a day or two to get something that you need," said one businessman, echoing a common strain. Others pointed out that Curaçao does have a language barrier for English speakers. Those Americans who have lived here for five years or more have generally, either learned to understand and speak a little Papiamentu, or are, for all practical purposes, fluent in it.

Americans are divided on the aspects of Curaçao life that are challenging to them. The divisions of opinions depend largely on the length of their stay and their experience in living abroad or lack of it. Those who have taken Curaçao as their first, overseas 'assignment' generally fall into the habit of comparing life in Curaçao with their former lives in the U.S.A.

One overriding assertion that was voiced by temporary and long-term residents alike is the feeling of being cast adrift in the world of information. There are, they point out, no English-language newspapers here, and very little radio and television news in English.

"Island Fever" — a feeling of confinement — was brought up mostly by Americans who are temporary residents in Curaçao. Their inability to engage in a favourite, American pastime — 'taking off' — brings along a restricted feeling, and some measure of resentment.

"Being an American I'm used to getting in an automobile, and if I want to drive across Kansas, or to the West Coast or something, it's no big deal," said one businessman. "But here, I have to buy an airline ticket to go anywhere. It takes some getting-used to."

On the social scene, the Americans polled generally tended to fall into two distinct groups — those who are here on short-term bases, and those who have made it their home. Americans in the for-



ALM pilots Joe Blanchard(l) and Robert Scott

mer group tend to socialize with other Americans, and English-speaking, temporary residents. They cite difficulty in breaking into Antillean social circles, and disinterest from among Dutch residents. Some blamed a language barrier for not developing closer friendships with permanent residents. Others explained a habitual unwillingness among permanent residents to develop friendships that may last only a few years.

Americans in the second group for the most part socialize in mixed groups, almost exclusively composed of permanent residents of the island. One American woman explained that she has accepted her lifestyle in Curaçao as it is, and does not wish to be among people who continue to compare it to the life in

America.

Beyond the realm of comparisons, most Americans polled said they had no intentions of leaving Curaçao in the near future, unless their respective businesses failed. Few ventured to predict if that would happen.

Nevertheless, they all pointed to Curaçao's potential for overcoming what they called its upcoming 'lean years'. Their reasons for faith in the island's eventual, economic success can be summed up by their observations:

"Curaçao has two things in its favour," said one. "A well-educated labour force, and entrepreneurs."

"There's a terrific amount of potential here that's untapped," said another. "I'm sure it'll be developed some day."



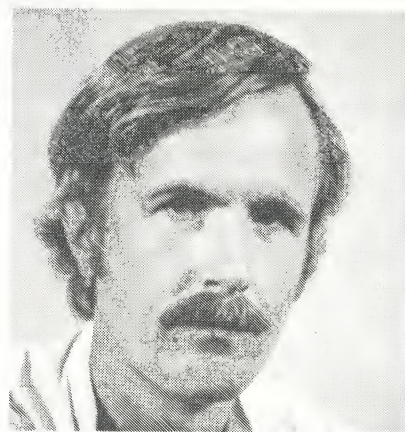
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# LAW AND LANGUAGE

by J.M. Reyntjes



Nothing is so important for good relations within a community than the ability of people to understand each other. In practice it seems as if little else is more difficult. It especially becomes like that, when not only metaphorically, but also literally people don't speak each other's languages. This is exactly how things are in the Antilles. Not counting the foreigners who live here (people of some eighty different nationalities....) three languages are spoken, English, Dutch and Papiamentu. Many inhabitants have a good command of only one of them; some of two, but very few can express themselves fluently in all three. As a consequence the Antilles decidedly are saddled with a language problem.

Fortunately on these peace-loving islands this does not lead to situations like in Belgium, where French and Dutch speaking citizens for decades have lived at war with each other, or like in Canada, where English and French speaking people confront each other as closed blocks. The situation here is more like the one in Switzerland. The difficult problem is there and it is admitted by everyone that it can only be brought to a satisfactory solution by a joint effort.

## Equal rights

In 1981/1982 a report was published on the language problem, in which a plea was made for equal rights for English, Dutch and Papiamentu. AR gave it a lot of attention. In the second issue of the second volume W. Luiten defended the position of Dutch as judicial language. After this he got involved in a discussion with a government expert in the fourth and fifth issue of the same volume. Since then a lot has happened and here and there some change has taken place. The discussion has narrowed down to the question if, and, if so,

how Papiamentu has to be introduced as official language in the elementary and, later on, in secondary schools in the Leeward Islands. Feelings sometimes rise very high, but everything indicates that Papiamentu is going to win the battle.

No wonder, it is the language by far more widely used. In addition many experts ascribe the poor command of Dutch and English of most Leeward Islanders to a systematic neglect of the teaching of Papiamentu. They allege that it is only possible to learn to speak a (foreign) language well, if one is also able to speak and write one's mother tongue well. Especially the writing thereof is often very deficient. Several entities (the government, labour unions, the university) are trying to bring about an improvement; e.g. by giv-

ing courses, publishing educational comics, etc. Almost on a daily basis, A.J. Maduro, who was named doctor honoris causa by the University last May for his great merits with regard to the promotion of Papiamentu, bombards his co-citizens with his views on the correct spelling of their language. Based on the report mentioned above a preliminary draft bill was made in 1983 to the effect that English, Dutch and Papiamentu would be given an equal position.

This signified another step forward. The bill is very concise. Besides the three languages formally being given an equal position, the most important provision will be the one contained in article 4:

"Everyone has the right to use Dutch, Papiamentu or English in communicating

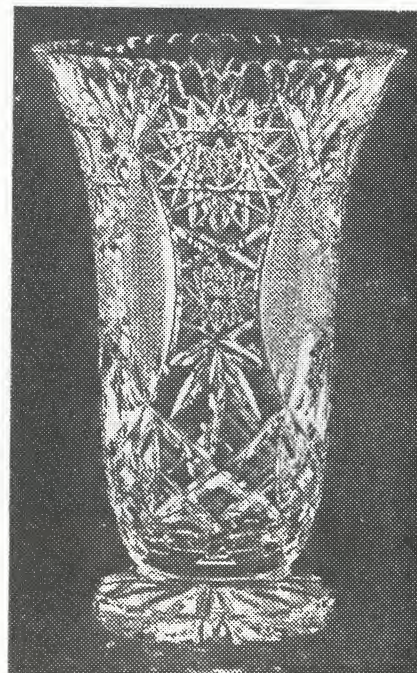
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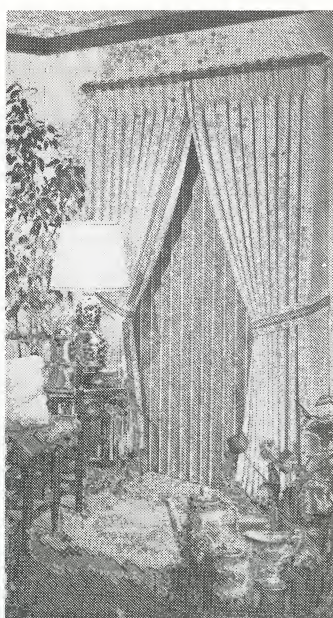
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### Justice

But also the police-force is a Government service. Imagine that I am caught by a policeman committing a traffic offence. Will he now only be allowed to reprimand or even hand me a summons in the language of my choice? Or am I not an "applicant" in the sense of the law? The Antillean police-force decidedly is not trilingual, neither is it possible to make him trilingual in the first next couple of years. He already has enough other problems. How should this be handled?

Another difficulty is the administration of justice. The current law stipulates that the written part of the proceedings (writ of summons, *procès-verbal*, sentence, etc.) in the courts in the first instance in Aruba, Curaçao and Bonaire may exclusively be done in Dutch, but in St. Maarten, St. Eustatius and Saba IF NEED BE also in English. Proceedings in the court of appeal as regard the written part must always be completely carried out in Dutch. But in Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao one is allowed, to one's own discretion, to speak Dutch or Papiamentu, and on the three other islands Dutch or English. At a first glance this may seem a bit complicated, but in practice it is not that bad. What does the draft state in article 3?

"Both Dutch, Papiamentu and English can be used in any proceedings in the Court in the First Instance or with any other entity, charged with the administration of justice. The entity concerned will pass sentence in Dutch, Papiamentu or English. If parties wish so, a sworn translation in one of the other two languages will be made available within a reasonable period of time". It sounds better than

the old regulation, but not all that glitters is gold. As Luiten already remarked in 1982, in legal proceedings formulation is very precise.

This is so, because there exists a strong connection between the contents of a concept, and the name it has been given. He who uses another term, is also referring to something else. Now then, the Antillean law system is almost completely built on concepts derived from Dutch law, and as a result also uses the Dutch names for those concepts. These names can only be translated into comparable English terms by specialized, highly qualified and therefore highly-paid translators.

It now becomes evident that even then the English term elected often does not cover the same concept as the Dutch word used originally. An example. Many books have been written on the Dutch concept "bezit". In a strict linguistic sense "bezit" is the same as "possession". But it will probably become apparent that the juridical concept "possession" has just a slightly different meaning. Often the good translator will not be able to offer more than descriptions. It becomes even harder when Papiamentu is used and when there is a translation into Papiamentu, which still has no juridical terms.

### Concepts

The university has offered to start working on a Papiamentu set of juridical concepts, but this will prove to be a laborious and time-consuming job. First funds must be made available in the budget, subsequently experts have to be employed and not until then can the work start. This will certainly take a couple of years. Initially it was proposed to order the judge to pass sentence in the language used by the parties involved. But what if the parties use different languages, e.g. one person English, the other Papiamentu? Will this not cause confusion of tongues, and will the one speaking Papiamentu be able to get his juridical argumentation in the footlights? The drafters have let themselves be inspired by the Canadian regulation, but there we are dealing with two languages (French and English) with a highly developed set of juridical concepts. In the proposal now submitted fortunately the Judge will be allowed to decide in what language the "authentic version" of the judgment must be made. But even so not all the problems are solved.

Introduction of the draft in the administration of justice will be very difficult. This does not mean that we have to be deterred by it. However, wouldn't it be more sensible to start where the problems are smaller? In small criminal cases in the first instance, the three languages can be given equal right, without it being disastrous.

### Practice

He who wants to go a step further right away, could extend this equalization to all cases in the First Instance, including the civil ones. Practice makes perfect. As soon as everybody has managed to master it, the regulation could be extended to the cases that are appealed. The Dutch High Court is the highest Juridical Instance for the Antilles, the same as the British Privy Council for the other Caribbean territories. Luiten and others state that here trilingualism must end. To me this appears to be a highly challengeable point of view.

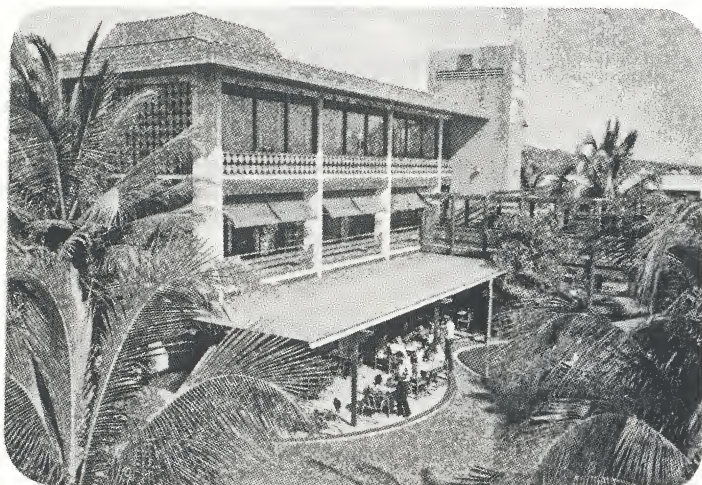
The High Court is Dutch-speaking but that does not imply at all that it would not be able to function otherwise. At the moment it already may find itself confronted with English documents (of the Windward Islands).

I do not even think that proceeding in Papiamentu will be impossible there, provided there is a proper set of concepts. As soon it becomes evident that the bill can be put to use in Antillean administration of justice, it can also be submitted to the High Court. It has been confronted with bigger difficulties before. A supplement to the Kingdom legislation in question will then be necessary.

If only we could say that the language problem is the only problem in the Antilles, we would certainly find a solution. Now we have to divide our attention and capabilities. Yet the solution will surely be found, but the road we still have to travel is long and difficult. The bill signifies a step in the right direction, but many more must follow. ■



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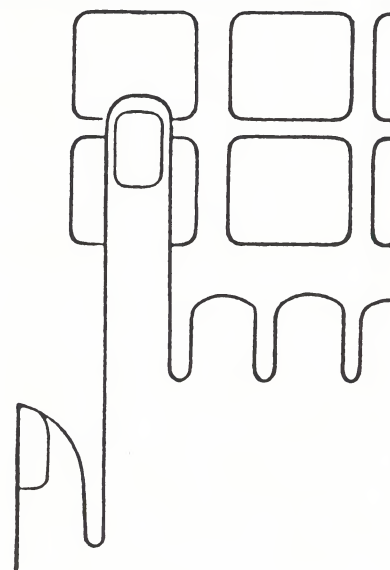
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# ROYAL START

## FOR CONTAINER TERMINALS OF ARUBA AND CURAÇAO



**"There are few communities where it is so generally taken for granted that the harbour is everybody's property and therefore also everyone's concern". No wonder, for the deep natural port of Curaçao is about the only gift nature bestowed on the otherwise barren island. Its history therefore is to a large extent to be told in terms of how men exploited that gift. And the island's future no less will be determined by the measure of care given to it.**

The official opening of the Curaçao Container Terminal on August 20 by Her Royal Highness Princess Margriet thus

had a promising ring to it. Even more so because the Naf. 85 million project is part of a total overhaul of the harbour in all its aspects. The prospects of the new terminal itself can already be called encouraging. A modest share of the regional transshipment market is apparently almost secured. A development which in turn could have a positive spin off effect with regard to the employment situation, the Free Zone and the still ailing Curaçao Dry Dock, CDM.

Even today the importance of the harbour for the island's economy can hardly be overrated. According to a recently

published policy paper of the Curaçao Ports Authority approximately 70% of all employment is somehow related to the harbour's existence. Only the financial off-shore sector and, if cruise-tourism is not taken into account, tourism could do without the port.

The revolutionary changes in cargo-handling of the seventies brought the awareness that the construction of a container terminal was an absolute must to keep up with the international developments. Holland declared itself willing to supply the necessary funds on the condition that a complete reorganization of the harbour facilities and structures would be

If anything her recent visit to the Netherlands Antilles should have taught Princess Margriet how to open container terminals. Two days after she did so in Curaçao, she again called out to a small figure high up in the cabin of a huge gantry crane, inviting him to let the big machine do its work. This time it was in Aruba. The crane worked and so it seems will the terminal, like in Curaçao part of a totally reorganized and overhauled harbour. Says the dynamic managing director of Aruba's Port Authority, Mr. Chris van Krimpen, "...it would have been an adverse asset to maintain the existing ports in a seriously neglected state and concentrate only on the new container port". Mr. van Krimpen, who came over to Aruba four years ago, therefore occupied himself not just with the construction of the container terminal, but also with creating efficient organizational structures and with upgrading the respective harbour functions. By no means an easy job, for as Mr. E. Voges of the Curaçao Ports Authority said at the opening of his terminal: "The introduction of new facilities and different procedures, in brief all changes, always breed resistance".

In both harbours the statement was proved right by the initial opposition to proposed measures by labour organizations and companies having their business in the ports. Most of those problems, however, have been solved and those remaining should be soon. One of the reasons why Mr. van Krimpen

is quite confident about the future viability chances of Aruba's small but very much up to date harbour. Interviewed by Amigoe's Jos van der Schoot he declared to feel increasingly positive about the project. Mr. van Krimpen admitted that the relatively large investment (Naf. 45 million) does imply an element of risk. Obviously referring to less favourable economic forecasts he pointed out in the same interview that long-term economic planning has been proven impossible because of the unpredictability of developments on a world scale. "In this uncertain world", van Krimpen says, "prognoses cannot extend over more than a period of two to three years. I believe that the days of intuitive managers have returned: people who have that ability of insight — not to be explained by reason — on the basis of which they develop policies while taking into account the economic, social and political data".

He may have a point. Mr. Betico Croes, Aruba's political leader, struck a similar note when in his speech during the opening ceremonies he remarked that "small scale communities like Aruba, which are characterized by economic vulnerability, depend on a large measure on inventive thinking in order to survive". With a view to the accomplished upgrading of the ports and the ongoing efforts to attract business from Venezuela and Colombia, it cannot be denied that Aruba has fair measure of such a mentality. ■



enacted. This process, on which AR reported more than once, is today more or less completed.

A limited liability company, the Curaçao Ports Authority (CPA), was established to take charge of overall port management. Stevedores and transport activities are looked after by the Curaçao Port Services (CPS). Relocation of activities led to greater efficiency and the labour force as a result could be brought back to acceptable proportions.

Thus the conditions for the establishment of a viable container terminal were met. Although construction will not be completed before August 1985, the terminal, which offers ships 500 metres quay length and two Ro-Ro berths of 25 metres each with a depth alongside of 40 feet, became operational three months ago. Designed for up to 50,000 moves per year the terminal presently handles 11,000 containers (22,000 moves) destined for the local market. It was decided by the CPA that the income derived from this use of the terminal for domestic pur-



poses should cover the entire operation's costs, thus creating room for offering shipping lines, wishing to use Curaçao for transshipment purposes, highly competitive prices.

It should be realized that the outlook with regard to transshipment of containers is not very promising. The region's function in this respect has shown a decline during the past years. Nor does Curaçao's hinterland offer very bright perspectives with its restrictive laws and ailing economies. The island, moreover,

is not ideally situated with regard to the shipping routes presently used. Highly competitive prices therefore must be offered in order to capture if only a modest share of the market.

Another condition to attain the latter is that shipping lines can be given a guarantee of reliability. Outbreaks of labour unrest or technical failures would be fatal to the business. To minimize the first danger the CPA has adopted a most responsible wage and social benefits policy. In order to assure a reliable and fast handling of cargo the CPA has requested Holland to finance a second gantry crane. A request which apparently has been granted.

The CPA's aggressive market policies, it seems, are beginning to pay off. General manager Mr. E. (Jacky) Voges, indicated to AR that contracts assuring the terminal of a monthly handling of 500 containers for transshipment may soon be signed. This would increase the total number of yearly moves with 24,000. But even more important such a development would generate employment and have a moderating effect on the rates for domestic handling, which in turn should reflect positively in the general price index. ■

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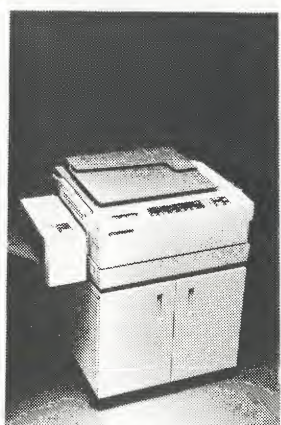
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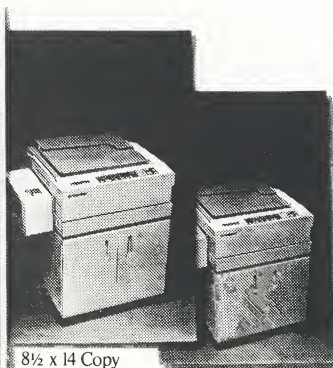
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# PIERSON CURAÇAO LINKED TO REUTERS

by Nancy Siegenthaler

Curaçao's reputation as a center for foreign exchange dealing is expanding along with the operations of the bank that made it possible -- Pierson, Heldring & Pierson, of Curaçao. Since the final telephonic connections were made to the bank's Reuters information system last fall, Pierson Curaçao's dealings in foreign exchange grew from virtual non-existence to tens of millions of dollars a day in volume traded.

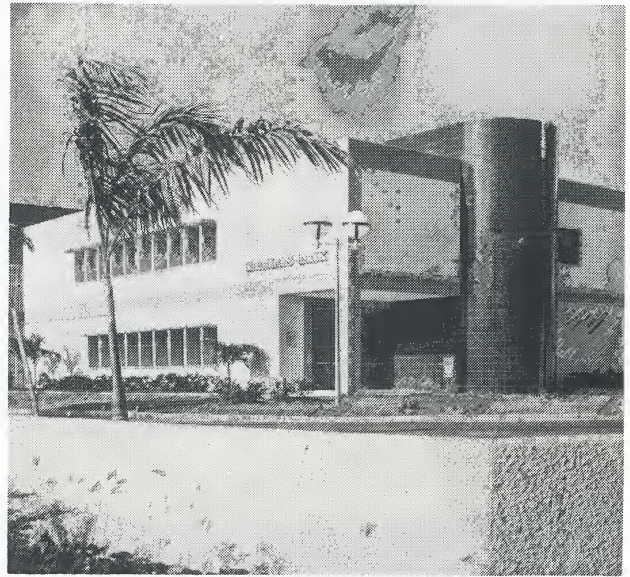
The mechanics that made it possible for the bank's foreign exchange dealings to flourish is the latest addition to its Reuters' monitors -- keyboards -- which allow Pierson's dealers to tap into Reuters' information storehouses, and send financial information to other dealers and clients in financial centers the world over.

On the receiving end the bank's Reuters addition lets Pierson Curaçao's dealers "call up" the latest interest, futures, and foreign exchange rates, seeing them instantly on bright-green video display terminals (by passing the former, daily telephone calls to New York and Amsterdam). It also brings the latest spot rates of other banks around the world that have 'pages' in Reuters' 'book' of clients. Financial news is also received.



*Pierson, Curaçao dealers Karel Lankenau and Arnold de Lange channeling millions a day*

On the transmission side, Pierson Curaçao's dealers send their rates (quoted usually in dollar and guilder rates) to other dealers who are subscribers to the Reuters system. Due to the bank's Reuters page, foreign exchange dealers in Hong Kong, for example, can now see Pierson Curaçao's rates on their video screens, when they want a quotation in a currency Pierson Curaçao regularly deals in. The bank's rates are routinely flashed onto the computer screens of more than 4,000 banks world-wide, that receive Reuters' financial service.



## Barclays catching the eye

Boasting to be the only bank in the Netherlands Antilles with offices on all six islands, Barclays has, nevertheless, always remained relatively unknown to the man in the street. This should soon change. The Bank's recently completed and eye-catching premises on one of Curaçao's busiest traffic-arteries will, no doubt, do much to boost its image. What the Naf.5 million investment will also do is testify to a fair measure of trust in the island's future in spite of the present economic depression.

Barclays' activities in the country are primarily corporate oriented. General banking services are rendered, "but" says general manager Charles Mabon, "we are not in 'super-market' banking". This explains why the Antillean people in general are not all that familiar with the bank's otherwise famed name.

Barclays is linked to the largest foreign exchange and money dealing group in Europe and deals in no less than 48 different currencies. With a view to the almost 100% dependency on imports the Bank, according to Mr. Mabon, is in an excellent position to render quick and varied services. "Moreover", he adds, "we always have our own people in the places where the goods come from".

Looking around the spacious buildings, the Italian furniture, German carpeting, Dutch security equipment, Swedish telephones and British vault underline Mr. Mabon's observation. The 1700 m2 building is clearly designed with growth expectations in mind, which at least reflects an encouraging confidence in the island's future viability. ■



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The Reuters page has changed not only the volume of foreign exchange traded through Pierson Curaçao's dealing room, but also the type of business transacted. Prior to the installation of Reuters' page, 92% of the bank's foreign exchange transactions were deposit deals (simply giving and accepting deposits with other banks). The levels of interest rates on deposits can equalize for periods of up to two weeks, so a Reuters page for a dealer engaged strictly in deposit dealing may be superfluous.

Pierson Curaçao's dealers were shooting for other foreign exchange markets, as they awaited the Reuters keyboards. The first was the spot market (in which one currency is bought and sold against another, with delivery two days later); the second was the forwards market (in which currencies are traded now at a fixed price, for delivery at a specific date in the future); third was the financial futures market, whose skittish rates are transmitted from Chicago and London at once.

For Pierson Curaçao's dealers the Reuters keyboards, supplementing its monitors, was essential to making deals in these markets, because with the touch of a few keys the vacillating trading rates of these markets can be seen immediately. Rates in the spot market, for example, may change every five seconds.

"If you deal in large amounts of money, and you do it with very small margins -- you sell and you buy dollars with a mar-

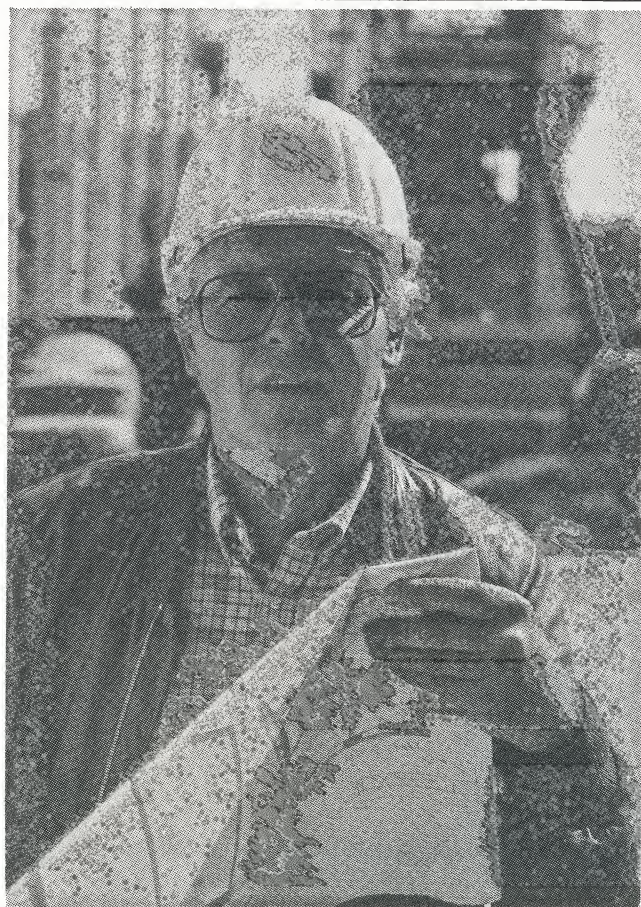
gin of maybe a tenth of a percent -- then you cannot afford to do that if you don't have this information," said H. André Sypkens, Pierson Curaçao's General Manager.

Currently 80% of the bank's foreign exchange transactions are in the spot market, while the remaining 20% are in forwards, according to Karel L. Lankenau, Chief Dealer.

The bank declined to say how much the Reuters addition has helped it make in earnings, but Sypkens said the nature of the business makes earnings variable, anyway. Furthermore, he added, the bank's dealing room's profitability is measured by the fact that it continues to pay for the Reuters service. Its price tag, he said, is the principal reason, why Pierson Curaçao is the island's only financial institution with a Reuters page.

Since its completion last fall Pierson's completed Reuters system has caused the bank's reputation to grow considerably. "It's expanding all the time now -- we're spreading the word", said Sypkens. "But, it's a small world. Dealers know each other. Probably at any given time there's not more than five people working -- at least in this time zone -- and making an active market in guilders."

The bank's reputation in Europe receives a big boost from the time clock as well. The day's trading in Europe ends at 3:30 PM. After that time European dealers often call Pierson Curaçao to buy or sell in order to close their last minute deals. ■



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# WHITHER GOES THE UNIVERSITY ?

by J.M. Reyntjes

In times past, when the Antilles were still a colony, all university trained personnel — mostly law graduates and engineers — were contracted from Holland. The gradual awakening of a sense of nationhood and the relaxation of the colonial ties generated a call for own academic education. A first resolution in that direction was proclaimed in 1944. But right up to 1971 no action was taken. In that year the Law School, founded in 1970, opened its doors. The establishment of the Technical School followed in 1972. And again one year later the Law School's curriculum was broadened with a management course, which developed into what is now the Socio-Economic faculty. In 1979 the two schools were merged and the University of the Netherlands Antilles (Universidad Nashional di Antia, UNA) was born.

A new and modern building at the Jan Noorduijnweg in Curaçao, originally destined to house the Technical School, became the home of the young university. In 1983 the campus adjoining the university grounds and with a capacity for 100 students was officially opened. The Law School has an extension in Aruba, while also in St. Maarten courses are being given. Thus already thirteen years of academic activities have passed. In April of this year when the 12 1/2 year mark was reached, the first Doctorate Honoris Causa was bestowed on Mr. A.J. Maduro, honoring his great contribution to the development and study of papiamentu. The UNA itself is, however, only five years in existence. The underlying question of the following is: how does the young institution shape up today?

## Growth

These first five years have been marked by an accelerated growth. The premises, originally only intended for the Technical

School as noted above, have already been outgrown. There is a shortage of lecture rooms and tutorial studies. The library has a considerable number of its books stockpiled elsewhere. In April of this year the registered number of students was 689, of which 230 had a government scholarship. The registration per faculty is shown in index 1.

The strong position of the law faculty becomes evident when compared to the University of the West Indies, which covers a much larger area. In 1983 only 107 more students were registered at the law school of that institution. The reason for this phenomenon is, no doubt, the relatively large demand for law graduates in the Antilles, caused by the development of the financial-economic sector. The same applies to the Socio-Economic faculty, which experiences the fastest growth. This faculty is expected to surpass the law school soon.

## House-wives

The UNA is sometimes, in particular in

the Netherlands, derisively called a "house-wives' university". The greater part of the student body, it is claimed, is made up of the wives of Dutch expatriates. How mistaken this perception is can be learned from index 2.

It should, moreover, be kept in mind that among those registered as 'from the Netherlands' a fair number of Antilleans are included. After all 15% of all Antilleans live in Holland, which implies that some of their children, who were born in that country, are now studying at the UNA. The house-wife myth is kept alive by a persistent depreciation of former colonies' inherent capacities.

What can be said is that the percentage of those born outside the Antilles and registered at the UNA (19%) compares unfavourably to the national figure. Of the total population in the Antilles 12% is born elsewhere. The reason for this disparity is first and foremost a matter of pre-university training.

Comparing the numbers of graduates per faculty (see index 3) the following should be remarked. The relatively high number of law graduates is explained by the fact that the Law School is the oldest faculty of the UNA. With regard to the Socio-Economic faculty it should be observed that a number of students are absorbed by the economic sector before graduation. They are obviously more interested in acquiring the proper know-how than in the official graduation certificate. Although understandable this development is not in agreement with the concept of an institution of higher education and something should be done about this.



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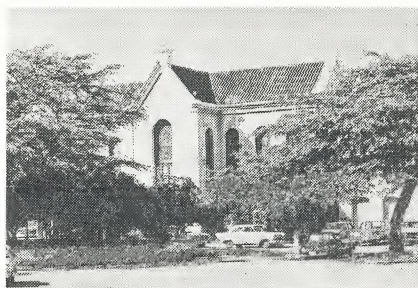
It is also interesting to note that, whereas in the early years of the UNA many students, in particular in the Law faculty, were older people who in the past had not had an opportunity to follow an academic course, today the majority of freshmen come straight from high school.

The Antillean legal system is almost entirely derived from the Dutch system. Consequently tuition at the Law School was originally strongly Dutch-oriented.

The curriculum prepares for a Masters in Antillean Law, fully recognized in the Netherlands. A Masters in Dutch Law can be obtained after following an additional 6-9 months course at the University of Nijmegen. A number of Dutch expatriates obviously have made use of this opportunity after graduating at the UNA. lately more attention has been given to international law than is customary at other law schools. It is felt that to be acquainted with both international law and the legal systems of the country's business partners such as the USA, is indispensable for a small nation like the Antilles, in particular as it has developed into an international financial centre.

The Technical and Socio-Economic faculties were from the beginning much more American-oriented. The Bachelor Degree the courses prepare for is similar to an American B.D. Gradually, however, all three faculties became more regionally oriented. Although the Socio-Economic faculty still maintains close contacts with the Florida International University and the University of Groningen (Neth.), and the Technical faculty with its sister institution in Eindhoven (Neth.), ties with the University of the West Indies have recently been strengthened. Closer co-operation with institutes of higher education in South America is being sought, but the difference in language still causes serious problems. Hopefully this will be overcome soon.

The question is often raised why a small country like the Antilles desires to have its own university. Should it not take an example from Luxemburg, which prefers to send its young people to larger and well developed universities like Paris and Brussels rather than establish a by necessity limited and small own institution of higher education? Would a study in Miami, Leiden or Caracas not offer Antilleans much broader and better opportunities?



*the old law school premises*

The Antillean situation is, however, decidedly different. Luxemburg is a highly developed nation with a cultural history many centuries old. The Antilles, on the other hand, have just emerged from the colonial era. Not yet having firmly established its own identity, the people are highly vulnerable with regard to outside influences. The Antillean society needs a point of reference in order to develop itself. Precisely a university which is — and this should not be forgotten — not only a place of learning but also a centre of research and development can be such a point of reference. The implication is of course that the university will have to focus its attention on preserving and further developing of what is typically Antillean, its own language, history and legal system. Such an approach would forego the continued domination of foreign norms and ideas by teachers, jurists and managers educated under the influence of the same.

This does imply that what has been learned elsewhere should be neglected. One of the greatest dangers facing young nations is the temptation to fall into an arrogant and chauvenistic provincialism. But what comes to us from afar should be adapted to the Antillean environment before it is put to use. There are, moreover, some added advantages to having one's own university. Education at home saves foreign exchange, usually renders better results as many students studying abroad fail because of adaption problems, and it limits the possibilities of what is called the brain-drain. These advantages, it should be noted, only pay off, however, when graduates continue their studies at least for a short while at a foreign institute of higher education. Then the disadvantages of the small scale situation will be counteracted and a broadening of mind results.

### Vision

Ideally the Antillean University should be society's driving force. What is called

the fly-wheel effect must be striven for. It should not be satisfied, in imitation of the European model, with conducting mere scientific research within the comfortable safety of its own walls. Likewise there should be no arrogant clinging to the so-called 'academic level', the latter once again according to the European model. The university should be an integral part of and give direction to the entire educational system and maybe even co-operate with other institutions in order to bring together academic and higher vocational training into one institute.

The university should next aspire to translating the findings of its own and others' research in terms understandable to non-academicians, in particular where it concerns issues relevant to society. A university's task is to serve all of society and not only its own student-body. Consequently it should not only open its doors to outsiders to come in and deliver lectures, conduct courses or perform at cultural events, but it should also step out through those same open doors.

What is meant is that the UNA should be attentive to the needs and demands of society. Responding to these needs should not be viewed as an 'extra', but as an integrated part of its task. Much of what is elsewhere left to the government and what may seem to be a typical task of the authorities, should in the Antilles be taken care of by the university. In this respect one might think of the dissemination of information about the latest decolonisation conference with Holland, the fiscal relationship with the USA and the respect for basic human rights in the Antilles itself.

Such a vision has its consequences. It requires a thorough reorganization of the university's structures. Proposals to arrive at a more efficient structure for decision-making are presently being discussed at the UNA. These reflect also on the highest authority in the university, the Board of Trustees. Presently its members are appointed (after approval by the Minister of Education) by way of co-optation. This should be changed. The concept of a university serving the entire society implies a representation of that society's social sectors like employer's organizations, trade-unions and the society of jurists, on its governing body. In that way a more effective involvement of the university in society will be secured.



In order to bring about an integration of the university in the educational system it may be advisable to appoint a representative of the Department of Education on the Board of Trustees. But first and foremost educational policies will have to be defined and a pre-condition for such defining is the establishment of a Council of Education.

### Expansion

If the university is to live up to what has been indicated above, an expansion of UNA's full-time staff is unavoidable. Presently the Socio-Economic faculty for example has a staff of only 4, which will hopefully soon be 6. But even then a staff of that size can hardly be expected to do more than its basic task of teaching. Even the running of the faculty is now a problem. Many tasks have to be delegated to part-timers, who more than often than not have a full-time job elsewhere as well. But this is not all. A way must be found to also permit research and (non-academic) teaching of the local language, papiamentu.

It should be observed at the same that when a university becomes active outside its classical academic confines there is a real danger of a lowering of standards.

This should be averted. The UNA should keep itself well informed about developments abroad, nurture its contacts with other institutions of higher education and invite the critical evaluation of its achievements by outsiders. Its scientific publications — the UNA is its own publisher — should be made available to experts by using the English and Spanish languages. It may even be advisable to have some courses taught in those languages. There should be no hesitancy, in the absence of local expertise, to contract non-Antilleans. Antilleanisation will develop naturally as long as estrangement from the indigenous cultural patterns is being avoided. Academic education is too important to be subjected to arguments concerning the employment situation.

Finally not only the university will have to adapt itself to society. The community must be prepared to back up its own institution of higher education. This remark does not in the first place refer to the issue of finance. In these days there is little money available (where has it gone?) and consequently also the university will have to economize. But what is meant is that a dissipation of human and financial re-

sources should be avoided.

To mention one example: the university library has a serious lack of space. With financial aid from Holland it is being attempted to solve this problem. But at the same time a gigantic public library is being constructed elsewhere on the island. A project, the costs of which are twice the amount the entire university premises amounted to! Would it not make more sense to combine the two library projects? A solution which would also re-

duce the enormous expences of each library subscribing to foreign magazines and publications!

Thus fares the UNA. Excellent plans and good intentions are plentiful. Society's support will increase as the UNA makes itself more available to serve the community. Difficult times are ahead. Both with respect to financial and constitutional matters we may expect bad weather. But hindrances are there to be taken. ■

<b>INDEX 1</b>			
Law	144 male	108 female	total 252
Social-Ec.	123 male	117 female	total 240
Technical	189 male	8 female	total 197
<hr/>			
	456 male	233 female	total 689
<b>INDEX 2</b>			
<b>Country of origin</b>			
Law	183 Antilles	35 Neth.	15 Surinam
Social-Ec.	200 Antilles	14 Neth.	23 Surinam
Technical	174 Antilles	4 Neth.	15 Surinam
<hr/>			
	557 Antilles	53 Neth.	53 Surinam
<hr/>			
<b>INDEX 3</b>			
Law	127		
Social-Ec.	46		
Technical	24		
<hr/>			
Total	197		

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*sun and moon, growth and death*

In many museums the directors of achievement are afraid to burn their fingers buying works of present day painters. Even in the Museum of Modern Art in New York it became clear to me that the word modern refers to the work of artists long since deceased, who were struggling for recognition around the beginning of this century. Fortunately there are exceptions to this rule and also fortunately there are galleries that give the painters of today the opportunity to show their work.

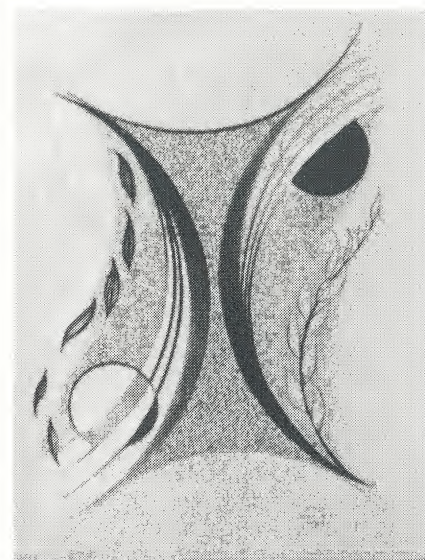
Generally the purchase of modern art more often than not appears to be for the sake of safe investment rather than to act as a Maecenas. Of course economic circumstances are not ideal at the moment, but just imagine what it would be like to be a "peintre maudit"!

Just the same this course of affairs does conduce to a proper selection among the artists. Only those who are compelled by "non possumus non pingere" seem to have the talent required to persevere in the face of adversity. Still in my opinion it would be recommendable to stimulate promising talents. Naturally one can discuss endlessly on the merits of this suggestion, but my own view is that in general it is pedagogically better to stimulate than to always let people struggle on by themselves. Of course the most important question remaining is whether talent that

in the end does manifest itself would have developed in the same way with or without stimulation.

Hanni Lang certainly can be considered as one of those artists who up to now have received too little attention. My feelings are that her talent should no longer remain hidden. What she has produced undeniably shows growth. I'll even go so far as to state that a broader recognition of her work will make it attain more depth.

Hanni Lang was born in Rottweil, Germany in 1918. In 1941 she was granted a scholarship to study at the Art Academy of Karlsruhe. In 1956 she settles in Curaçao and works here as a window-display artist and interior decorator. At first she is not so active as a painter and designer; this does not occur until the seventies. Enough now about the person Hanni Lang. As a matter of fact she does not like any publicity at all about her personal circumstances. What's important is her work, the things she has made, and those tell more about her experiences than she actually cares for. Yet the pictures painted by Hanni Lang are so worthwhile that it was a great pleasure for me to get her permission to write about them. According to me the world-behind-the-paintings seems so gripping that the paintings for once have



*sun and moon, growth and death (reversed)*

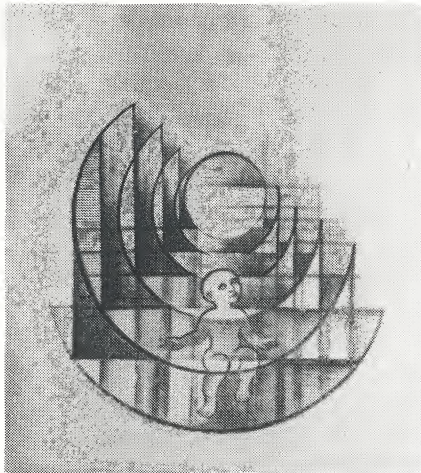
to be made known to a broader public. Besides that, the drawings and paintings are simply beautiful, and that in itself would be reason enough to draw attention to them.

Lang's early work shows affinity with Modigliani's and Munch's. In her work especially the eyes appear to be Modigliani-like; the strict honesty emanating from her work reminds one of Munch's. For a starting artist these two certainly are good teachers, even though the word "teacher" is a bit of an overstatement. It is more correct to say that Modigliani and Munch were "en vogue" at the time and that as a consequence automatically and not intentionally an equality of sound and tune came into being. In addition in her initial work there is a certain emotionalization, somewhat in the sense of ART can change the world. But the harsh facts of the second world war and the consequences thereof very soon push her towards reality; dreaming and emotionality belong to childhood, to ideals that cannot be realized.

None the less the works she did in her youth are important. They show certain characteristics that later on are to appear again and again in Lang's work. To mention a few motifs of this first period: hon-



telling herself constantly that the essence of things is determined by each individual for himself. A good comparison in this connection is the so-called love/hate relationship. Hate and love are so closely related, but at the same time so essentially alien to each other that they are/have become each other's anti-poles. The object of love or hate, however, remains him/herself (somebody who is loved by us is beautiful in our eyes; somebody who is hated, is ugly; the person in question who is either loved or hated does not change by what the other thinks of him/her!). So it is with beauty; pure beauty in itself is unassailable and eternal; the person who deals with it determines what the value thereof is for him or for her, and whether he/she will love or hate.



*harmony between circle and square*

When Lang has learned to cope with her crisis, we see from/in her work that she has improved through it. The number of motifs in her work is also increased. In the first place there is the motif child. In a world, about which it has been discovered that a positive approach (an eye) or a negative approach (a hole) must be adopted dependent upon each individual by himself; the discoverer (i.e. the artist) is new, inexperienced, small, in short: a child.

To this almost automatically is added the mother motif, probably because of a yearning for security. Only this addition will prove to be temporary, for too much security stands in the way of maturing. The mother motif therefore soon makes way for the motif of the earth and the cosmos. A remarkable thing in all this is, I find, that this expansion does not supplant the child motif.

My explanation is that when someone's knowledge is enhanced, he again becomes a child in the world of enhanced knowledge. Lang obviously is entrapped in the problem that in spite of growth she remains small. The child that she portrays in her pictures therefore often brings along its own world, even cherishes it and has a lot of trouble distancing itself from it. When this does happen, her work also becomes more perceptive and of a broader view.

It are fortuitous circumstances that compel Lang to give up the world of the child (or should I say her very individual views on humanity and society). She receives an order to make new-year cards. In her attempt to give form to the progress of time, her attention is drawn to the problem of time and space. It seems as if Lang's philosophy is changed by this order. She proceeds from a rather conventional concept of the progress of time, the so-called hour-glass. However, in the artistic representation thereof, the change simultaneously takes place. Have a look at the pictures shown in this article.

With circling lines "old" is coupled to "new", at the same time the sun and the moon are pictured, and also growth and death. The progress of time proves to be a much more extensive problem than a change from December 31st to January 1st. Remarkable enough — taking into account the foregoing — it is the sun that can be explained as an eye and the moon as a hole.

Also the child makes its appearance in this series. At first we see it, as it were enclosed between the sun and the moon, between old and new, but the extraordinary thing is that its bars at the same time are its wings. In a next picture the child itself becomes the time-glass; it stands with its feet in the old time and from its hands grows the corn for new food. Around the child's middle moves the Zodiac. It seems as if Lang wishes to indicate that time is a terrestrial concept. In a broader sense time disappears, something that is evidently essential in this world in order to exist.

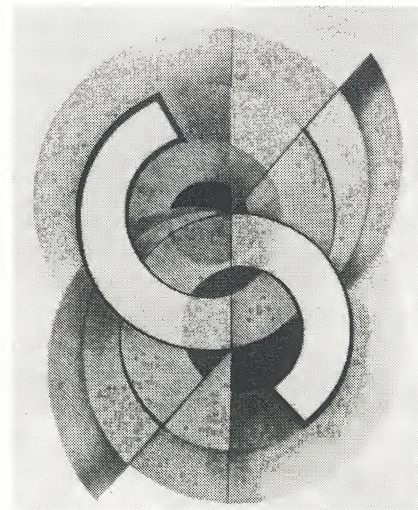
It will be clear that Lang's work has many symbolic aspects. She is quite aware of this, which I think can be deduced from the next motif, that of the shell. In many of her works we see one or more shells. To me the shell on the one



*aquarel (1947)*

hand is the symbol of closeness. On the other hand the portraying of it (e.g. in half-opened form) is a reflection of the wish to open oneself. For it is in that way that we indicate to others that we (i.e. Lang) realize that we are looking at reality in a very private way, but also that we wish to throw open ourselves. According to me in this way is once more expressed what I mentioned before: reality is a subjective truth.

If all the motifs mentioned are put together (to make it easier I will repeat them — honesty; urgency; desire to see and see through reality; fear of emptiness; beauty; reality is a subjective truth; the child; the mother; the earth/cosmos; time; space; the shell) one cannot arrive at a conclusion other than that these motifs together add up to expressing oneself in an abstract way. A balance has to be looked



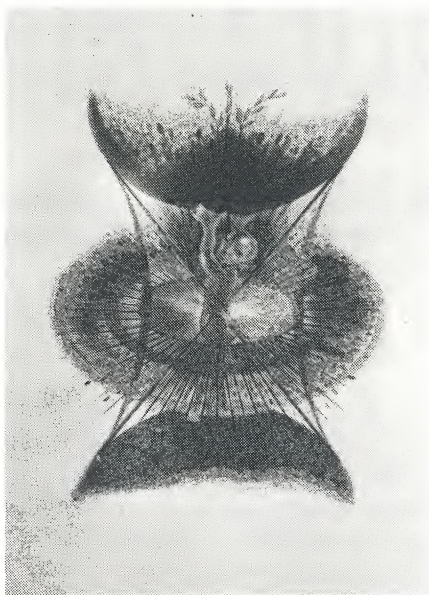
*illusion of the perfect geometric form*



esty, the wish to see and to see through reality, and finally the fear of emptiness. In this article I will for convenience's sake regularly use the word eye for wanting to see and perceive and the word hole for fear of emptiness.

As an example of the work produced in her youth is printed here the picture of a water-colour done in 1947. Three children looking through the display-window of a toy-shop. Even after the war the toys are still unobtainable for these children; in the background the ruins of a destroyed city can still vaguely be distinguished. The picture in fact speaks for itself, but still I do not want to refrain from drawing attention to the fact that as a viewer one can identify oneself just as easily with the children as with the shopkeeper who sees the children!

Of the four characteristics mentioned above the first two are more concerned with the character of the person, without telling HOW that person is. Wanting to see and see through reality and the fear of emptiness, coupled to the question whether existence "überhaupt makes sense", say a lot more about how that person is and WHAT his viewpoint is. These two have a lot more to do with the painter's sphere of ideas and philosophy. In my opinion the picture shown here and the



*child as looking glass into the cosmos*

other pictures of that period emanate sadness about existence. In addition there is pure registration of what is visible everywhere. The desire to escape from this rather negative attitude towards life does not appear at that moment from the produced work. The reaction it causes is more in the sense of: "Oh yes, these things do happen like that" and that's the end of it. It is silent melancholy.

**I**n the sixties the painter goes through a serious crisis. Naturally I will not go into that crisis itself here; it

proved to be detrimental to the work produced in that period. Yet I want to point out the motifs honesty and urgency referred to above. The drawings/paintings (it is often a mixed technique that is used by Lang) that are the result of this crisis confront us with a series of splendid flowers, with a Christ-figure, and with a cross. The last two are easy to understand; but with the flowers this is a little more difficult. All the flowers are connected to a background that gives rise to the assumption that the flowers spring from either emptiness or from an eye. (I already indicated eye/hole).

It seems to me that the following may be a probable interpretation. I experience all the flowers as very beautiful; to me they represent growth and bloom. In the same way the Christ-figure and the cross represent suffering and death. Beauty and suffering/death are present at all times, but are not always visible to everyone in the same way. Therefore an eye/a hole is necessary to give perspective to them. But who determines if an eye is an eye, or a hole a hole? That will always depend on the person who has to draw the conclusion. I must add that no one ever draws conclusions in the same way all the time. And in this way we arrive at the following thesis: reality is a subjective truth!

The eye/hole motif is very essential for Lang's work. It is as if she wants to keep

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for, a balance between light and dark, between round and square, between life and death, between everything that is opposed to each other. In expressing herself in an abstract way Lang chooses geometrics forms.

Sometimes these are so perfectly drawn that one is inclined to say that these drawings were made with the help of ruler and compasses. This is far from the truth, because if one looks closely enough one notices that the circles are not really round and that the straight lines are so in appearance only. In still another way does Lang indicate that reality is an illusion, that the person who has to draw a conclusion about a reality will only be able to do so proceeding from his own cadre of reference. In this way Lang — in my opinion — adds a very important element to her work, and that is the request for understanding of and for each other.

**R**ecapitulating I think that the fascination of Lang's work lies therein that it tells a story about a person in development, but at the same time the story of a human being (the human being) who again and again has to make choices (eye/hole) and who consequently always remains responsible for the decisions to be taken. All this is easy to write, but seeing the work itself, the impact it causes, is very impressive. Before drawing attention to Lang's work through this article I invited several people to go and have a look at her work. Among them, completely different as to nature, talent and ambition, there was complete agreement about the quality of her work. Unanimously (whether they admired the work or not) they expressed appreciation for her great craftsmanship and the great eloquence of these forms of art was evidently acknowledged by all who saw them.

Going back to the opening sentences of this article I notice that the individualism in Lang's work is ebbing away through contact with others and their recognition of her work, and it seems as if she has received new impulses to go on growing. The question remains of course, if without this attention and without this recognition, the work of art itself would have lost some of its value. It appears from this article that this would not have been the case, but as I already said before: light has to be able to shine. ■

by Alice van Romondt

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